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# Never Mime

William Merenda  
1st Place Fiction Competition

One night, late November, a dark figure hid in the shadows of an unsuspecting mime's house. She was practicing her walking in the wind exercises in front of a TV with the sound turned off. A floppy-shoe footstep pierced the silence, which stopped her abruptly. She gestured like she was calling to see if there was anyone in the house with her. There was no answer so she started the trapped in a box exercise. A gloved hand came from behind her and shoved a pie in the face of the mime and held it there. The mime struggled and fell lifeless at the murderer's big red shoes.

The next day the house was swarming with clown cops, taking pictures and examining the apartment with oversized magnifying glasses. A large clown walked under the "Crime Scene - Do Not Enter" streamers, when he was stopped by an officer.

The large clown introduced himself as Sergeant Clown E. Pants and flashed his badge. The officer gave him entry and answered his questions as he searched the place.

"What was the time of death?" Sergeant Pants asked as he crouched over the body.

"About 7:43 p.m., just before she was going to go to bed." Sergeant Pants tapped the pie with his middle finger and tasted it.

"Wow, this stuff is extra thick... Have this place checked for foreign makeup marks and large footprints, boys; what we have here is a murder!"

"How do you figure, Sarge?"

"First, and most of all, she's a mime; you know, they don't use props. Second, check this pie out. See how thick it is, it would be murder gettin' this off your face."

Sergeant Pants searched the whole apartment afterward and the only other clue was a hand buzzer dent in

the pie pan.

That evening, after work, he decided to unwind at the local bar.

He pulled himself up on a barstool and yelled for the barkeep. The bartender was a cheery, overweight clown with a bright colorful outfit.

"Hey Clown, the weight of the world got you down again? You want a joke, maybe a seltzer in the pants? How 'bout a pie in the face?"

"God no! Not a pie! Don't mention pies!" Instantly, Clown became aware of his attitude and felt bad for over-reacting. "Sorry, Smiles, just give me a seltzer."

Clown felt much better after being seltzered, but he was still distraught because in the back of his mind he knew he didn't have any leads in his case. He would sometimes ask Smiles about some cases if he got stuck because he knew Smiles was well acquainted with all his patrons.

"Smiles, I need help with another case. This guy only kills mimes. There has never been a clue I haven't found on previous cases, but this guy never leaves clues. This is the seventh death and this hand buzzer dent is the first clue." Clown said, handing Smiles a photo, "Hand buzzers are obscure gags, do you know anyone who might own one?"

Smiles thought long and hard, making a mental list of all his possible leads. Moments later, he scribbled several names and addresses down on paper in crayon. Smiles handed Clown the note which sent him rushing out the door, thanking Smiles all the way.

In minutes, Sergeant Pants arrived at the first address on the list, an antique joke store. The corresponding name was a Mr. Buttons. Sergeant Pants walked into the store and immediately scanned the situation. The only person in the place was a hobo clown behind the counter with very large

buttons on his costume. Just to make sure, he asked, "Is your name Mr. Buttons?"

He was an elderly clown which caused his response to come out old and frail, "Yes, can I help you?"

As he talked, Sergeant Pants looked around for clues. "Do you get much business during the day?"

"No, that's why I'm forced to keep my store open now. I'm the only one working here so I must close at midnight."

"Has any one bought a hand buzzer in the past week?" he asked while examining a bare spot in the dust on the hand buzzer shelf.

"No just a rubber chicken. . . oh, and a can of peanut brittle."

Sergeant Pants walked up to the counter. He looked Mr. Buttons straight in the eyes preparing to ask the most important question that whole night, "Can I use your restroom?"

Mr. Buttons gave him directions to the restroom in the back. Besides really having to go, he had another reason for being in the bathroom. After relieving himself, he examined the window in there. Just as he suspected, there were scratches and deep chips in the wooden frame, like someone had forced the window open.

With his investigation of the antique joke store finished, he told the store owner of his findings. "There have been several break-ins in an unknown period of time. The fact that everything in the whole store or any cash wasn't stolen means the crook was stealing stuff subtly. One or two things at a time to not attract attention."

Sergeant Pants left Mr. Buttons, in awe, to go to the next address on the list. On the way, he ordered an undercover police officer to watch the store. Just then the usually quiet police radio interrupted, "Attention all officers, what do you

get when an officer is down at 1624 McDonald Lane? 'mime killer' is suspected, over."

Sergeant Pants rushed to the scene of the crime. By then, hordes of police officers were pouring out of a tiny police car. Sergeant Pants walked over and started examining the body. He hoped to find a clue to which direction the murderer went.

The officer was killed by a balloon shoved down his windpipe and inflated, causing suffocation. Sergeant Pants turned the body over to see if there were clues under him. He noticed his back was wet, and he realized why; the sprinklers were on shortly before his death.

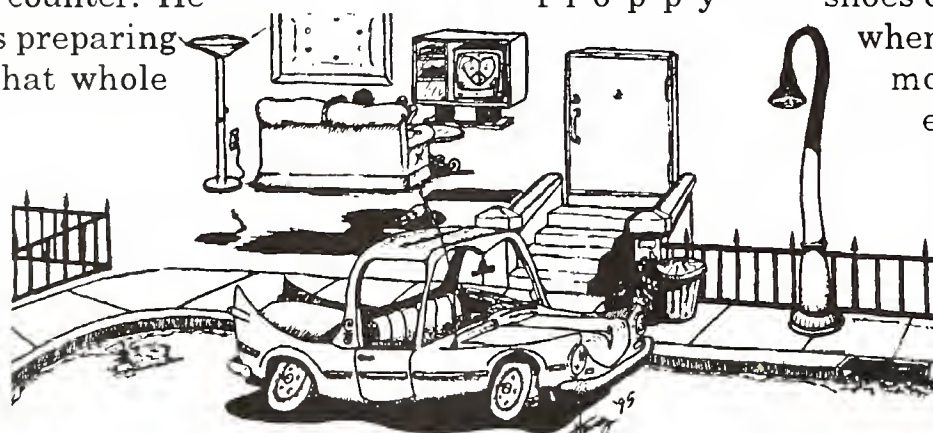
Usually, there are never any footprints because big floppy shoes cause a snow-shoe effect, but

when grass gets wet, they become more noticeable. And sure enough Sergeant Pants found some. He followed them to the edge of the yard where they ended at a fence. Stuck on the fence was a torn piece of the killer's outfit. Because there are never two clown costumes

the same, he gave the fragment of the killer's outfit to an officer to run through the computer. If the killer had ever been arrested, there'd be a match and he could get the killer's name.

Sergeant Pants searched the entire area. Like previous murders, there were very few clues. It was a long night, and Sergeant Pants' deduction powers were weakening. He decided to go home and rest up for tomorrow's interrogations. There were just two more names on Smiles' list.

The next morning, Sergeant Pants' car pulled up in Miss Prissy's circular driveway. He knocked on the door and



"Hey... It's My Brain"

Ink Drawing by Christopher Hensey



Miss Prissy's mime butler answered. He gestured for Sergeant Pants to come in and wait while he got the madam. The waiting room was filled with news-clippings of her buying expensive props. If there were two things she was famous for, it was her props and the fact that her nose flashed when she lied. She was not the kind of clown that would get bloody makeup on her gloves, but she was a suspect nonetheless.

Sergeant Pants was just looking at a pacifier in a glass case when Miss Prissy walked in. "What can I do for you sergeant?"

"I'd like to ask you a few questions. Do you know of any break-ins at the antique joke store last night?"

"Antique store, which antique store?" Her nose started flashing like crazy.

"Tell me, Miss Prissy, do you like mimes?"

She turned her back to him like she was hiding something. "I love mimes. My beloved butler's a mime!"

Sergeant Pants knew she was at least guilty of knowing about the break-in, and she was starting to get evasive, so he decided to finish the questioning downtown. He took out his finger cuffs as he walked toward Miss Prissy, "You're gonna have to come with me, Miss Prissy."

She started to get panicky. "I didn't do it, I didn't break into any joke store!" Her nose was silent.

At that point he realized she might not have done the crimes, but she knew who did. In an attempt to get the name of the thief, he decided to trick it out of her with a bluff. "I believe a few nights in jail will change your story!"

Miss Prissy started crying more, "I didn't do anything. I didn't do anything!" Just then, the butler busted through the door. He waved his hands violently with gestures to the effect of: "She didn't do it! I did. I did it for Miss Prissy to... show how much I love her."

"The butler did it?" Sergeant Pants was surprised.

It was obvious Miss Prissy knew everything that was going on, she must've loved him too; she was protecting him.

In the name of love or not, it was against the law to steal, so he had to be arrested. He strongly insisted he never killed anyone, and Sergeant Pants believed him.

That meant the antique joke store crook wasn't the killer. At the police station, while turning in the butler, Sergeant Pants got the results of the computer costume search. The search came back negative. Whoever the killer was, he didn't have a criminal record. The last lead he had, the last name on Smiles' list, was disqualified when he was located in the cell next to the butler's.

With no other recourse, Sergeant Pants decided to try back at the bar. He snuck the fragment of costume out of the evidence room. With any luck, Smiles might have more names to try.

By the time Sergeant Pants arrived, it was already eight o'clock. It was getting late, but he had to wait through the evening rush to have time to speak to Smiles alone.

"Hey, Clown, what are you doin' here so late?" Smiles greeted him.

"I'm strictly business now, call me Sergeant Pants. Do you have any more leads for me?" he asked as he was handing Smiles the fragment of costume.

Smiles' bow tie spun around three times. He stood there in shock, afraid to even touch the piece of cloth. "Please don't tell me you got that from the killer!"

"Yeah, this came from the guy; you know this pattern?"

"It came from my brother, Chuckles... my dead brother, Chuckles. When I was young, no higher than a circus midget, he had a mime girlfriend. One day, he was involved in a horrible men-in-a-horse-suit accident. They galloped over his head causing him to lose his speech, and for some reason, he didn't seem the same. Everyone made fun of him, especially mimes, even his girlfriend. A month after the accident, we went camping to get away from the taunting. He fell into the river, but I had my back to him, so I couldn't see him calling for help. He was swept down stream. I thought he drowned.

People searched the river, but they couldn't find a body."

"Bummer." Sergeant Pants was speechless over the terrible story.

"Yeah, I'm a crying on the inside clown. You have to get him, I'd try back at the last house someone was killed. It was just some clown; Chuckles only kills mimes. There must have been some reason he was there."

"Of course, I should've thought of that!" he screamed as he jumped off the bar stool. He ran out the door thanking Smiles as many times as he could. He drove as fast as his little car could go, in hope it wasn't too late. He radioed in backup to his destination.

"Attention all cars in the area; what do you get when you cross the 'mime killer' and Sergeant Pants at 1624 McDonald Lane? Be advised a silent alarm has been activated at that address," the radio answered back.

Moments later, at 1624 McDonald Lane, Sergeant Pants busted down the door to find a hideous half mime/half clown-thing, trying to cut the imaginary box with an imaginary chain saw.

"Hold it right there!" he commanded, pointing a water gun at him. But it was too late, he broke free and was dodging streams of glue. Safe behind a sofa, he tried retaliating by gesturing like he had a gun.

"Mime guns don't work on us clowns. Give yourself up, Chuckles!" trying to stop this charade.

Almost at that cue, tires screeching and flashing red and blue light indicated the house was surrounded by police. A commanding voice was heard over a loud speaker, "Come out with your hands up, and don't try anything funny!"

Chuckles stood with his hands raised in the air, still with an evil grin hidden in the painted frown. Sergeant Pants radioed his backup that the situation was under control. They cautiously entered. As the first officer walked through the doorway, it distracted Sergeant Pants long enough for Chuckles to pull his finger, and a large, black spherical bomb

popped out of a pocket. Chuckles dove for the back door. Sergeant Pants reacted instantly, shooting Chuckles, which stopped his escape.

The whole crew backed off, careful to not disturb the long sparking wick. The bomb squad was called in. Two frantic clowns burst into the room running around in circles bumping into each other. Everyone instinctively took another step back.

An uneasy feeling spread through the crowd as the two goofs hit their thumbs with mallets. Sergeant Pants pushed the bomb 'experts' out of the way, taking on the responsibility. The mass breathed a sigh of relief that a competent person was at work.

Sergeant Pants stared in concentration at the explosive. His gloves filled with sweat. He gently grabbed the wick with his thumb and index finger. Chuckles was cowering stuck to the wall.

Sergeant Pants was preparing to yank the wick out. It was getting shorter and shorter. He stopped! He thought it might have been booby trapped.

He gently leaned forward and blew on the tip of the wick. That only made it burn faster. There wasn't one face not beading with sweat through their makeup.

One last hope, he tried drilling a hole in the bottom to drain out the gun powder. But it was too late. The sparks and the bomb were getting closer and the shell was too thick.

Sergeant Pants was getting very tense. The sparks were getting closer, and closer, and closer, and... just at the last second a drop of sweat fell from Sergeant Pants' forehead and landed directly on the tip of the wick, putting it out instantly. Everyone almost passed out. A few of them even wet themselves.

Sergeant Pants, ready to wrap up the whole evening, turned to Chuckles. He was long gone, in his place was an empty canister of glue solvent. Chuckles was on the loose. No mime in the city was safe...





*"The Fantastic Grotesquerie Carousel" Pen Drawing by Egan Saint-Michael*

## Just Another Day

Blurred, shimmering  
Rays of light  
Filter  
Through closing lids

Red froth  
Bubbles  
From lips  
Caked with weather

Silent shopping cart  
Today's tombstone  
For us whose only memory  
Will be chalk marks  
On cold cement  
That warms  
As sensation leaves

A lifetime of dreams  
Stuffed in plastic bags  
Torn and dirty

No one heard  
No one cared  
As breath released  
In one last grasp

Poor no more

*Steven Keith Kever*

## To Cathy, With Love

Dear Girl,

You have been "with me" all day, today,  
your sweet voice melting my melancholy  
with promises that Time will:

HEAL  
ABSOLVE  
ERASE...our mutual pain.

I have sensed your precious presence  
on this mournful anniversary...  
seen your father's eyes in yours, reflecting:

FAITH  
LOVE  
COURAGE...our mutual legacy.

Thank you for being here.

Love,

Mom

*Lois Wood Schiman*

*Two poems by Cathlyn Baker .....*

Robin

Robin flies through empty space.  
He soars the sky,  
War paint, faded long ago.

He takes my dreams and steals my sight,  
Yet, I need it every night.  
A creature of Gold,  
His soul on fire.

Dream seeker,  
Build your home.  
No longer wander alone.

Rest within the shadows,  
Heal with your stolen dreams.  
Rob us all of our strength.

Use us to mend your wings.  
Robin will soar again.

Lost at Sea

I stand among the shadows,  
Pier above and sand below.  
Tiny giggles from tiny mouths  
From tiny bodies from the North.  
Eyes closed, echoes  
Of the voices align with tiny bodies  
Running in the broken waves  
Along the shore.  
Resting in the rising palm of the sea,  
Tiny bodies, weightless,  
Being lured toward the setting sun  
For consumption.  
Raking fingers through the sand,  
Strongly gripped by nature's hand,  
Tiny giggles fade to cries,  
Fade to tiny bobbing eyes,  
Fade to silence.



# The Privateer's Quest

Carl Boehm

Robert stepped away from his men, nearing the queen. His head was held high, and he did not kneel when he approached. This was not his queen, and he gave allegiance to no one but himself and his men.

"Queen Edwina, I am pleased to report the raiding of two Tarian trading vessels," Robert announced with a humbled sense of pride. A quick shutter came over the queen as she cracked a wide, greedy smile.

"What treasure do you have for me, pirate?" the queen sneered.

"First, I am not a pirate," Robert stammered. "Pirates are dirty, kill countless people, and are missing an eye or leg. I have all my parts intact, and I hardly ever kill. Isn't that right Mr. Gent?" Mr. Gent was Robert's right hand man, and easily the best shot on the sea.

"There was that fellow we ran over with the boat last voyage..." Mr. Gent started when Robert loudly interrupted.

"Thank you, Mr. Gent, that will be all. I took the two chests of treasure and spread the wealth among the needy in your kingdom." At this point the queen was not only disgusted with the men's lighthearted attitudes, but also the loss of so much treasure.

"How dare you not give me my gold to fill my treasury!" Once again Robert found his services being used by another greedy monarch with a treasury bigger than her heart. Knowing exactly what to do, he started to play the game.

"Aren't your people your greatest treasure?"

The queen, nearing total bodily anger, replied, "My people are my business, and since when do pirates care so much about peoples lives? Go out there and fill my treasury like I hired you to do."

The men made their retreat to the door, but just before leaving, Robert added, "I am a *privateer*, not a pirate." With that, the men left the great hall and entered the marketplace.

Robert wondered why they called it a great hall, when the kingdom itself was probably the smallest he had ever seen. There

were castles that seemed appropriately at home on the mighty ocean, but this was not one of them. Other than the money, Robert's mission came about because of these castles. For inside these magnificent structures were kings and queens with much larger egos than these walls could hold. When their heads swell too large, these potentates look for more space to take up, namely in a neighboring kingdom. So, some small argument starts and escalates into a war. That is where Robert and his men come into play. While raiding ships from the opposing navy, Robert would take the booty and spread the wealth among the people of both lands. The people, who wanted no part of a useless war, were usually eating a balanced diet of dirt. So, Robert would redistribute the wealth until both treasuries had run dry. That way, the people could take over and establish a proper form of government, most of the time including both kingdoms. And, of course, Robert kept his own little profit for what he called "social redistribution."

"Mr. Gent, did we keep our share?"

Mr. Gent cracked a small smile and reported, "Yes, sir. Fifty percent of the booty was kept for our retirement funds. I would like to donate my share to the local thieves guild in hopes that they are planning a royal assassination." Robert didn't even hold back the laughter, for it was just what he needed after the whole confrontation. Mr. Gent looked at Robert with puzzlement.

"Why can't we just find another kingdom to offer our services to, Robert?"

"The King of Taria is a butcher, and we are so close to having enough money to end all of this," Robert answered. After dispatching the crew back to the ship to load supplies, Robert and Mr. Gent stayed to finish shopping. Down an alley lined with shops Robert found just what he was looking for, a wedding dress. "What do you think, Mr. Gent?"

"I don't think you will fit in it, sir."

"I won't argue with you on that point, but it is for Gwen." After paying a bit more than was asked, Robert took the dress and headed for the ship with dreams of his bride in his head.

On all occasions, Robert was unquestionably generous. He tipped way more than need be, and paid the poor merchants twice the price. Robert was always fighting a reputation he didn't know how he got. Many lands call him Robert the Red, for his sword always bears the blood of his victims. In truth, Robert has only

killed two people, and they deserved it. Some called his ship *The Red Sea*, for that is what traveled in the vessels wake. Actually, Robert named the boat *The Fearless*, but to the people, that didn't sound frightening enough. Of all the rumors, the one that troubled him the most was that he was heartless. In his chest, under the sun darkened exterior, beat a heart bigger than the sea he sailed. The end of each voyage meant that Robert would return to the hidden harbor to see Gwen standing at the dock. Then she would recite the questions that she would always ask Robert. "Would you quench my thirst? Would you light my darkness, and would you give me your heart?" Robert would respond quicker than the beat of his rapidly pounding heart.

"I will bring you a river to quench your thirst. I will beckon the sun to shine at midnight and light your darkness. As for my heart, you need not ask for it. It is yours already."

Reaching *The Fearless*, Robert gazed upon the queens coach parked at the dock. After being allowed near, he reached the queen, alone in her coach. "Robert, my navy is preparing to raid the northern coastline and I hear rumors that your secret hideaway is there. Give me the location so you do not fall victim to the raid."

With smugness, Robert belted out his answer. "There is nothing of value on the north coast, and I will never tell you where my camp is." The queen nodded and again smiled with dark intent. She knew Robert was bluffing about the north coast. As her coach pulled away, the queen could not hold back her much needed laughter.

With a day's preparation, the mighty sailing vessel was underway. All the men aboard looked forward to once again seeing their wives, and celebrating. Each return to port was a reason to celebrate another victory. Robert awaited his greatest victory, conquering Gwen's heart in marriage. To Robert, the ship could not sail fast enough. He kept busy raising sails and navigating, but it just wasn't enough to quell his anxiety. As if the need to see Gwen wasn't enough excitement, a voice bellowed from the crow's nest to make Robert jolt.

"Captain, there's a ship following, and it looks like their Tarian," the voice cried. With a sudden jolt, Robert dropped the rope he was rigging and rang the bell above the wheel to sound alarm. Those men who weren't already on deck appeared instantly, arms full of swords. When every last man had been armed, they worked on

lowering the sails. Why lower the sails? Robert had no fear of these men. Just like every other fight, he would take this one head on. Besides, it confused the heck out of the enemy and usually caused them not to fire their cannons.

All at once, it seemed that nature just stopped. The wind, the water, the ship, and even time itself had seemed to have frozen. When the confused Tarians pulled alongside *The Fearless*, Robert's scream had thrown everything back into motion. Years of life on the sea had enabled Robert's men to consider an ocean raid as second nature. The Tarian vessel was full of young faces. Faces attached to young bodies with arms barely strong enough to hold swords. In only a short time all the Tarians were surrendering, and Robert's men once again had scored no fatalities.

"Mr. Gent, let's go see what treasure this vessel may hold," Robert said. Something struck Robert as strange as he was boarding the vessel. Why were there no seasoned crew on board? Even the captain seemed younger than normal. The feeling became more overwhelming as he went below deck. Inside the holds, there were no treasures. Heck, there wasn't anything but an empty hold. Robert quickly searched for the galley. As he opened the cupboards frantically, Mr. Gent began to wonder what was the cause of the behavior. In the corner, a very young looking man dressed in a white apron was cowering in fright. "Mr. Gent, I think we have a prisoner," Robert said in a clearly fake devilish voice.

"Argh, Robert the Red, I believe we do," Mr. Gent played along. The cook started shaking, and the sweat became more evident on his clothing.

"Please don't kill me, Mr. Red. I have very important information to give you in return for my life." Robert took the sword from his side and aimed it right between the cook's eyes. For once, the reputation has proved useful. "The captain of the boat is the king's nephew. It appeared that he was appointed to the mission to gain experience and so he could boast the challenge of hunting down Robert the Red. Our purpose was to delay you so that the king of Taria and your queen could plot against you. Queen Edwina will deliver you to King Hammond of Taria in exchange for a peace agreement and possible merger of the kingdoms. Right now they are raiding your hideaway to kidnap someone and use them to bait a trap. I tell you this because when I was working in the kitchen, I overheard the king formulating the plan in the royal dining room.



Most likely the king wanted to martyr his nephew to justify killing you. It seems that the people have grown fond of your gifts. That is why I'm probably here, in the hopes that I will perish knowing this plan." Robert could barely believe what was happening.

"Why do you tell me this, cook?" The cook had stopped shaking, almost knowing that he had no justified fear of Robert.

"I tell you this because on one of your visits to my kingdom, you gave a small frail woman a bag of gold. With that gift she was able to bring her starving children from the brink of death. With my meager cook's salary, my mother and brothers and sisters would have died. Pretty ironic, here I am a cook for the king, while my family starves."

Robert looked towards Mr. Gent. "Mr. Gent, do we have room on board *The Fearless* for a cook?"

"Yes, Robert, we could always use a cook." Robert extended his hand to the man, and helped him up.

"What is your name, cook?"

"Zachary, sir."

"Well, Zachary, would you help me save my home?"

"Aye sir."

12 As soon as the three men ran on deck, Robert began screaming. "Men, seize the weapons and return the men to the ship. We must raise sails immediately for home! It seems that this was just a decoy so they could ravage our hideaway, and kidnap our loved ones. The only thing this vessel carries is our wasted time." Now Robert really had a reason to be anxious about seeing Gwen. He had to make sure that she was all right.

*The Fearless* had puffed into the small cove that was adjacent to the hideaway. Rowing the longboat to shore as fast as he could, Robert felt he couldn't row hard enough. All of the structures were visibly torn apart, and the women all stood outside the ruins, crying. Mr. Gent approached his wife with open arms. She slowed her crying to talk to Robert. "I'm sorry, they got Gwen. They left this note. I couldn't do anything." Immediately she started to cry again. Robert looked at the note. It was coordinates for him to sail, and he had to be alone. He was to take *The Fearless* to a point in the middle of the sea, and wait. If he followed orders, they would release Gwen and kill him.

He looked at Mr. Gent. "Mr. Gent, I want you to do some things for me. First, fill *The Fearless* with all the gun powder you

can spare. Second, ready the men for the fight of their lives. If they must, they can kill. Wait for my signal to attack. Finally, keep the wedding dress I bought clean. I'll need it when I get back." When the list was complete, Robert sailed off alone.

It was night now, and the Tarian warship, *The Sea Devil*, could be seen on the horizon. *The Fearless* was anchored, with one lantern lit on deck and all the lamps below deck illuminating a silhouette on the dark ocean. From his position, Robert saw the vessel draw near. It was tremendous in size, towering over *The Fearless*. It was an oncoming demon in a hell of blackest night. What Robert saw made him fill with anger. Gwen had been tied to the figurehead of the boat, like some kind of prize. The King of Taria and Queen Edwina were on deck, waiting to capture the privateer. Soon *The Fearless* was boarded by hundreds of men brandishing swords and torches. "What have you to report?" the king yelled to his men.

"Sir, the boat is empty. My men are checking the hold now." That is just what Robert wanted to hear. He ripped the canvas off the longboat where he hid. From its position in the water, he was ready to strike. Grabbing the rope that attached the boat to *The Fearless*, he was able to reach a second rope. This led to a cannon that was aimed at a massive stockpile of gunpowder in the hold. With a quick tug, *The Fearless* erupted in a volcanic swirl of both light and concussion. Before anyone realized what had happened, Robert was already untying Gwen. Violently, Robert rowed to the middle of the darkest part of the night.

"Robert, how are we going to escape?" Gwen fearfully asked.

Just then, Mr. Gent's voice echoed through the night. "Lower sails and light up the darkness!" Like an angel gliding across the heavens, *The Fearless II* appeared. Soon, the sparks from the clanging swords were appearing like fireflies, adding to the glow of the night. Robert left Gwen in the safety of the long boat and made his way to *The Sea Devil* via *The Fearless II*. Most of the men were destroyed in the blast, but those left could fight. In the midst of the fighting storm Robert saw the King of Taria and Queen Edwina waiting for him. The King raised his sword and lunged for Robert. With fierce determination, the two traded blow for blow in a dance of deadly consequence. Then, Robert heard the voice of the one he was fighting for cry out. All the men stopped fighting to see what was happening. Queen Edwina had her arm around Gwen's neck



and the two were standing on the upper deck.

"Put down the sword or I will kill your precious treasure," the queen barked. A single red drop of blood flowed from where the queen held the knife pressed against Gwen's skin. Robert dropped his sword and fell to his knees in front of the king. As the tears fell from Gwen's beautiful green eyes, he saw something odd. Gwen was smiling. Then, he saw the reason for her joy. From her side emerged a large knife. After a short pull away from bondage, Gwen drove the dagger into the queen's wicked heart. Gwen certainly did learn a lot dating a privateer.

Robert tried to get to his feet when he felt the blunt end of a sword knock him to the ground. The king was now standing over him, with his sword in one hand and Robert's in the other. "Now, pirate, you have just ended your journey." The king raised both arms in a position to deliver the ultimate blow to Robert. From his position on the floor, Robert was powerless to do anything but watch the king prepare to strike. With his mouth wide open, the king began to scream. From the center of his chest a small silver protrusion appeared, revealing the tip of a sword. The king hunched over sideways, dying as he fell to the deck. Behind him stood Zachary, pulling his sword from the dead king's body. With both the king and queen dead, the remaining men surrendered.

"Mr. Gent, raid this vessel and appropriate all weapons and treasure for our cause."

"Yes sir, as we speak." Soon *The Fearless II* left for the hideaway. The *Sea Devil* was sent to the bottom of the ocean, crewed by the dead left aboard.

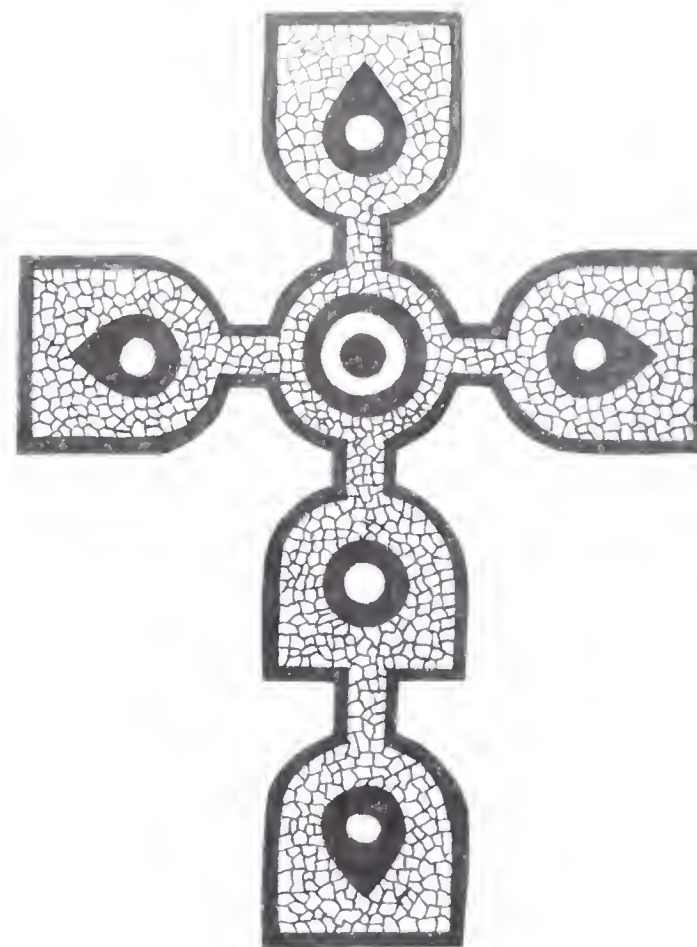
*The Fearless II* sailed into the morning. Gwen and Robert engaged in a kiss that lasted almost the entire voyage home. As the ship neared the hideaway, Robert approached Mr. Gent. "So, my friend, are we ready to retire?"

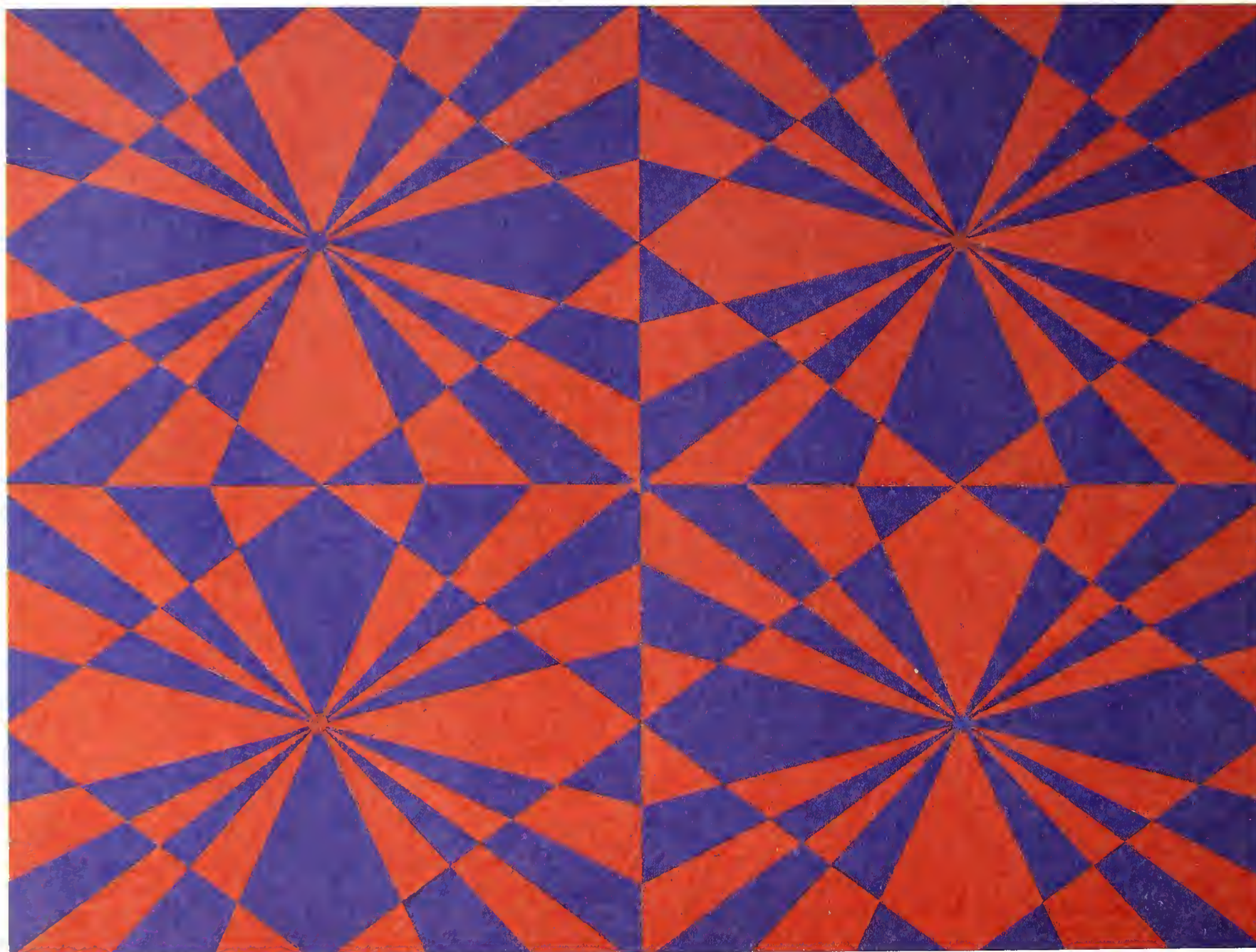
Mr. Gent smiled and spoke up. "Yes, sir. But who will replace us?" just then both men focused their gaze upon a young man cleaning his sword on deck.

"Zachary," Robert announced, "the ship is yours."

"You mean I get to be a pirate?" Zachary inquired.

Robert sighed. "You could be a pirate. I was a privateer."





*1st Prize, Phi Theta Kappa Florida Regional Competition "Dimensions" Acrylic on Canvas by Becky Borowiec*



*Three poems by Cheryl A. Bringas* .....

Articles

Discarded sheets of  
newspaper are picked up,  
carried by the alley breeze:  
a dozen black and white  
ghosts dance in the  
moonlit night - graceful,  
eloquent, concinnical

Passing headlights swivel  
from the wall, spotlight  
the specters' flight

As if by silent command,  
the pages freeze, fall,  
are drawn down by the  
undertow of spinning wheels.  
Compressed between  
puddled asphalt and  
elastic synthetic material,  
the quire transforms into  
a pulpy dark gray mass.  
Old news.

Aphrodisia

Follow me deep  
into the core  
    of my mind.  
Slide through  
    cerebral canyons-  
scale gray matter  
    to the peak  
of thoughts I hide  
from prying eyes.

Come inside  
right or left-  
whichever you decide  
    just enter.

A car is waiting,  
your table is reserved,  
there is no fee.  
    Come...

take a trip with me.  
Travel paths  
    my soul has chosen.

Touch my body  
    with your mind.

Ride my words  
    to their meaning.

Matrix

Anger rages through my  
system, rips apart  
images of your hand  
on my heart, lips on mine,  
flesh inside me - hard, hot, wet

My pain solidifies  
into knives. Cold steel blades  
pierce your eyes, wrench orbs from  
bloody sockets. I long  
to remove the toy whose  
use eludes you.

Verbal manipulations and  
physical maneuvering  
badgered my soul, a quest  
for my trust. My body -  
overwhelmed, weak,  
believing - surrendered,  
became your playground while  
in secret your child grew  
in her womb.





"Dreams. . . And the 669 Box in Front" *Photograph by Tracey Petruff*



## A Notch

The phone call from oblivion  
Came as no real surprise  
"I'm sorry babe, I miss ya"  
Overture to faded lies.

His smugness, oily honey,  
Dripping through his thin finesse  
Must convince him that his skill  
Was what had captured him a Yes.

"Pick me up at eight," I stated,  
"French cuisine will do.  
And remember that I drink champagne  
Vintage '82."

I watched him as he plied his trade  
With flowers and with wine;  
I let him think he flattered me  
With all his well-worn lines.

I must admit I drank a bit,  
Adored the sensuous food,  
Inviting champagne's mellowness  
To put me in the mood.

Soon the mighty conqueror  
Had reached my bedroom door;  
I couldn't help but smile  
He was so convinced he'd score.

"C'mon, hon no, no me on top,  
We'll play my way tonight.  
Don't mess my hair yeah, just like that,  
A little to the right."

Six months' worth of female lust  
Can take some time to tame,  
But when my need was finally quenched  
I let him cry my name.

I curled with him a while, til  
His arm felt like a weight.  
I wriggled free and murmured, "Look,  
It's getting pretty late."

"I'm really beat, so could ya  
Lock the door on your way out?"  
I turned away to sleep so that  
My message left no doubt.

I'm sure it's puzzling him still.  
How did she turn the score?  
Though once a girl had let him in,  
A woman shut the door.

*Valerie Heller*

# Dumps and Dumpsters

Gary Herman

These are just the thoughts of a pillar of salt.

You make your plans and set your goals, but as you travel through your life, certain moments surprise you, and become paramount in your memories, despite your good intentions. During my excursion, the horrific events I have been made to experience have always dominated my introspective moments, becoming the anchors and cornerstones of that which has become me.

18 The cancer had been eating away at her for more than a year, once long and legendary legs becoming so brittle that they broke under diminishing weight while going to radiation therapy. A woman whose only sin was her vanity, had her considerable looks torn from her by an incessant and irreversible disease. While in the grips of unimaginable pain, she never lost her sense of humor. As her children gathered for what might have been their last visit, she, while laughing, pulled from her balding scalp tufts of what remained of her blonde mane beside the beautiful pool in her backyard, yelling, "Here you go, something to remember me by." When no one was looking, I picked one up off the floor and stuck it in my wallet. I still have it. She looked at me, her oldest son, in the eyes and continued her diatribe, "Your wife is an expert in makeovers; she should run a special on the half dead, but tell her not to take checks." I flew home.

I continued on with my life. I had a wife, a daughter, a business and a job, which all needed me. One day, I came home to an empty house and checked the answering machine. There was just one message, and it was from my father. All he said was, "Hi, It's me. Call me." I knew.

I called him back and he said, "She's gone."

You make your plans and set your goals, but as you travel through your life certain moments surprise you and become paramount in your memories despite your good intentions. She's gone. Those words will never stop ringing in my soul like a church bell calling the faithful, on Easter morning. My older sister got on the phone. I received my instructions, and I followed them. I took the flight alone.

I slept in my aunt's basement. One of mom's last requests was that she did not want my daughter, her only grandchild, to attend her funeral. She did not want to be remembered that way. She preferred my daughter to remember the two of them sitting at her makeup table, playing with various creams, applications and adornments, instead of the box, the wind, and the cold. Momma knew. My wife wanted to come, but we didn't have a reliable baby-sitter. I took the flight alone.

We, her children, arrived last at the graveside. As per her instructions, there was to be no funeral oration. When the box arrived at the site, it was to be put with as little ceremony as possible, into the hole. The rest of the family had already gathered, and of them. Some I knew well, some I could not recall ever seeing. They all looked at us. My uncle, her older brother, greeted us saying, "Would you look at this beautiful day, as if she ordered it." I was glad he remembered the script, for I had forgotten to rehearse mine. Those who lived up north did think it was unseasonably warm for November, but I had been living in Florida for many years,

*"These are just  
the thoughts of a  
pillar of salt."*



and I was cold in my funeral/job interview suit. The hearse arrived, and the box was lowered into the grave, with the minimum of words allowed by our religion. In the distance, I saw a monstrous garbage mound rising, artificial, green, high and pruned, the dump being located adjacent to the graveyard. The wind changed, and I smelled it. The next day, I returned home.

When I closed my eyes and breath in deep through my nose, I could still smell it. During my excursion, the horrific events I have experienced dominated my introspective moments, becoming the anchors and cornerstones of that which has become me.

The sun still rose, the waves still rolled, and the partially aware continued to oppress me with trite expressions of regret. I only cried when I was alone.

One day, while driving, I was crying so hard, the contact lenses popped right out of my eyes. My myopia being extreme, I almost crashed. Summoning all my powers of concentration, fueled by excessive adrenaline, I managed to pull over and park. I retrieved my glasses from my contact lens bag, and made it home. When I opened the door, for the first time in fifteen years, my best friend, my oldest cat, did not greet me. He laid in the corner of the patio next to the litter box. When I approached him, he just looked up slowly with glazed eyes. He could not stand. It must have been the equivalent of a feline stroke. Soon my wife and daughter came home, and we took turns monitoring his condition. I moved him to the other side of the patio, his favorite spot, shaded by a tree. His breathing was heavy, and he summoned all his strength to hiss and bare his teeth, as my other two cats, younger and the targets of his legendary ferocity, sniffed him, with what appeared to be equal concern. Our youngest cat, a blonde Persian kitten, approached him, something she would never get away with when he was healthy. She went nose to nose with him, as he tried to stand, gums and fangs bared in a final attempt at intimidation. The phone rang, and as I walked

across the living room, my wife said softly from the couch, "He stopped breathing." Those words will never stop ringing in my soul, like a church bell calling the faithful on Easter morning.

I checked him and he was dead. I drove to the nearest hardware warehouse and grimly bought a shovel, intending to bury him in my atrium, located right outside my kitchen

*"I drove to the nearest hardware warehouse and grimly bought a shovel ...."*

window, it being the only plot of land I owned. I sweated, cursed and banded as I tried to dig a hole, with my heavy glasses falling down the bridge of my nose, but directly beneath the veneer

of soil laid impenetrable rock and coral. It was no use. I leaned the shovel against the wall. It's still there.

I went back to the patio and picked him up. He wasn't my cat anymore. He was some macabre paper mache doll, covered with mangy fur. I put him in a garbage bag. I put it in another garbage bag, and I put the plastic coffin in my car on the passenger seat, and drove around the corner to the gas station I always used. I threw him in the dumpster. I breathed deep and it smelled like the dump which towered over my mother's grave.

The sun still rose, the waves still rolled, and the partially aware continued to oppress me with trite expressions of regret. Was it the power of love, or the power of death which for me has sanctified sights of refuse? I fear that this is a question I will be forced to ponder, far too long.

I could accept my own demise, at times I welcome the day, but how do I accept such a fate for those that meant so much to me? Dumps and dumpsters. What kind of fate is this, for those such as these? I only cry when I am alone.

These are just the thoughts of a pillar of salt.

## MATERNAL INADEQUACY

JUST  
ONCE YOU  
COULD HAVE TOLD  
ME YOU BELIEVED IN ME.  
JUST ONCE I WAS SO TENDER,  
SO DEFENSELESS AND YET, YOU  
PROCEEDED TO CRUMBLE THE CASTLES  
OF MY IMAGINATION WITH YOUR INSENSITIVE  
WORDS. TODAY I UNDERSTAND AND LONG BEFORE  
I DID I HAD FORGIVEN YOU, BUT STILL I COULD NOT RID  
MYSELF OF FEELINGS OF FEAR AND LONELINESS. REJECTION  
WITHOUT EXPLANATION, A DEVASTATING REALITY. TRY TO REMEMBER  
THE ESSENCE OF THE CHILD THAT I STILL AM WAS NOT READY TO BE STRIPPED  
OF HER MANY IMPERFECTIONS. THEY WERE PART OF A PACKAGE YOU HAD PURCHASED  
IN AN INSTANT AND THAT INEXCHANGEABLE QUALITY MADE A PRISONER OF ME. UNLIKE A  
GIFT FROM A LOVED ONE YOU COULD NOT KEEP "ME" IN A CLOSET NOR HIDE ME IN A CELLAR.  
INSTEAD YOU WERE SUBJECTED TO MY LOVE

## AGAINST YOUR WILL

AND BECAUSE THERE WAS AN EMPTY SPACE ON THE  
WALL OF YOUR LIFE, THERE I HUNG COLLECTING  
DUST. EACH TIME YOUR CARELESS WORDS LIKE AN  
IMPULSIVE BRUSH SOUGHT TO DUST-OFF THE DIRT OF  
MY LIFE YOU DID YOUR JOB. BUT I WAS LIKE A  
DELICATE RELIC; AND WHILE YOU REMOVED THE  
DEBRIS, THE HUES AND COLORS OF CONFIDENCE  
FADED TILL THE PICTURE OF me..disappeared.JUST  
ONCE YOU COULD HAVE TOLD ME "YOU BELONG  
HERE" IN THIS HOUSE. EVEN IF I DIDN'T, YOU COULD  
HAVE ACCEPTED MY NEED FOR BEING THERE!  
PERHAPS YOU COULD HAVE VARNISHED THE FRAME.  
FOUND SOMETHING OF WORTH. YOU COULD HAVE  
TAKEN YOUR EYES OFF THE PAINTING AND  
ACKNOWLEDGED THE PAINTER. I AM NOT A CRITIC. I  
KNOW WHAT I LIKE. BUT... THERE IS ROOM. JUST  
ONCE YOU COULD HAVE LOOKED AT "ME"! THEN  
ONE DAY, THE LOVING EYES OF THE ARTIST PIERCED  
MY SOUL. I ENCOUNTERED THE MASTER. I HAD BEEN  
HIS INSPIRATION BEFORE THE CRADLE AND A  
WHISPERED RECOLLECTION OF HIS CREATION  
PREVAILED. I HEARD HIS SONG, DANCED IN HIS  
FREEDOM AND THEN I UNDERSTOOD I WAS HOME

*Sandra Levy*





*"My View" B & W Photograph by William B. Waxgiser*

## The Dreamer

'Tis I who dream, the visions are clear.  
 Ivory towers are constructed upon air.  
 A hill of multicolored flowers blossom,  
 propagating with the sun. Grow as I grow.  
 The stream of my mind flows crystal clear.  
 I behold Kings and Queens of royalty spreading their law  
 upon the land, others send their praise.  
 'Tis I who dream upon every hour  
 Opening numerous doors. Images emerge from within.  
 A knight in sparkling armor warding  
 off the evils of life, a minstrel creating  
 with the voice of his pen, and a  
 gentle fair princess content in her throne.  
 I will soon encounter my destination by the path I drift.  
 Through valleys, and whirling storms.  
 My visions lie deep in the ocean. As the diamond waves hit the  
 shore with azure thought, the sea gull soars to all latitudes  
 striving with the silent wind of desperation.  
 Yes, tis I who dream.

*Natalie Kappes*

## No pain No gain

My people are dyin'  
By the hands of those like my own  
Wars dey fight  
among faces of their inner reflection  
Destroying images of demselves  
don know wuss wrong

wit nothin to gain  
Still I feel no pain

Mothers on a mattress cryin' priceless tears  
Babies playin' grown up, wipe away mama's fears  
22 Brothers on the sidewalk, face down, no hurt  
lifeless from a wound, stained riddled white shirt  
Toy guns and rough words, not just for fame

wit nothin to gain  
still dey feel no pain

Leisure conversation, another life gone by  
can't say its unusual, can't even tell you why  
kids playing hopscotch, enjoying their game  
forgetting the price, dey just draw a box around the stain

Mama looking out the window, hoping to see shame  
dey glance back

wit nothin to gain  
Still dey feel no pain

Mama shuts her curtain  
Lets her window down

God heals a people with no shame  
wit nothin to gain  
Help them to feel the pain

On bended knees worn and weak from prayer  
she speaks of times gone by witnessed by the wisdom in her  
hair  
God heal that people of whom you have no shame

Love them the same  
Help them to feel your pain

*La Sonya Jackson*





*Untitled B&W Photograph by Nancy Anderson*

# *The Unforgettable Thanksgiving Feast*

Barbara Barotz

I was a new bride living in a new city surrounded by a family that was not my own. I didn't want to be thought of as an outsider, rather a valuable addition to this close-knit family unit. Therefore, I was eager to accept my husband's suggestion that Thanksgiving dinner be held at our apartment. Attending would be my husband's family, along with several couples we had met in the short time we had been married.

24 Thanksgiving dinner is my favorite holiday ritual of the entire year. Within my own family, everyone would gather at my grandmother's house. Upon entering her front door, the delicious smells of baking turkey, stuffing with raisins, green beans with bacon, homemade pies, and cakes would make my stomach start to growl, anticipating the moment when everything was placed on the table, everyone would be seated, prayers were said and the feast would begin. The men would be congregated in the living room, leaving the kitchen and dining room to the women-folk. Constant chatter would fill the air as busy hands would be preparing the age-old family recipes. As the only girl in a generation of boys, I felt privileged to have graduated from being one of the kids being sent out to play so we wouldn't be underfoot trying to steal bites of food and finger licks of cake icing, to being one of the "women" in the kitchen. My grandmother's house was old and had no air conditioning, no dishwasher and few other modern conveniences such as a garbage disposal, but these things were not missed, as this was all part of this wonderful family event. So in planning my first Thanksgiving dinner as the "woman of the house and the hostess", I gave serious thought as to what I would prepare and how to cook so many different foods, and all to be ready at the same time. This dinner was, I felt, my debut to my husband's friends and

family. Everything *had* to be perfect. I had come from a small midwest town but wanted to appear "big town" sophisticated. Hopefully, I could be inventive and raise this event to a memorable level by preparing something a little different, along with the expected bill-of-fare. Living in New York City, I knew I would have little trouble finding ideas. Looking in the phone book, I located a place not far from our area that specialized in catered and unusual foods. That's where I headed.

The place was a house converted into a business establishment. The structure resembled a turn-of-the-century, several-storied house with large windows, pointed gables, and a porch that curved around half the outside circumference. White wooden steps led up to the front porch and its single door. I pressed the doorbell and waited for an answer. A man in a black suit, looking much like a waiter answered the door and asked me to enter. Inside the house, there were many rooms. Everything was rather dimly lit and had a very old atmosphere about it. The tables, which filled every room, were very heavy wood like they had been handmade and not mass produced. Above the tables, near the ceiling, was a track light system which sent down a beam of soft light to each table and its displayed item. The thick carpet, seeming to be a continuous expanse with no end, was teal blue and had a flowered pattern dotting it in equally spaced intervals.

"Can we be of service to you today, ma'am?" the man asked.

"Yes, I hope so," I began. "I'm planning my first big dinner party and was looking for something a bit different as one of the main courses. Would you have any suggestions?"

"You may have a look around and, if you see something



that interests you, don't hesitate to ask questions," he replied. "There are several floors, each with its own flavor, you might say. How many people are you expecting?"

"About twenty-five to thirty," I told him.

"There should be no problem. We should be able to provide just about anything for that amount of guests."

Winding around the tables on the upper floors, nothing seemed particularly special. Every item was on a platter covered with a glass lid so the contents could be easily viewed. There were some live items such as lobsters in a lobster tank and some items displayed cooked. Soon, I was at the stairs leading down to the lower floor. Even though every step was carpeted, the stairs creaked slightly, attesting to the age of the house. As he had done before the attendant followed me and waited by the steps to be available to answer any questions I might ask.

One certain table caught my eye, located right in the middle of the room. The platter with this item on it was equally as big as the table top itself. The huge curved glass cover was thick, had air holes, and looked very heavy.

"Excuse me," I summoned the attendant. "What is this?"

"It's a swoot," he said as he came near.

"A swoot!? What the heck is a swoot?"

"It's a hybrid cross between a small monkey and a wild turkey," he explained. "If you put your ear to the glass, you'll see why it's called a swoot; it's the noise it makes as it breathes."

Sure enough, as I put my ear down to the big glass dome, I could hear this animal as it exhaled, "swooooooot," pause as it inhaled and went "swooooooot." "What does it taste like?"

"Much like a smoked turkey. The meat is very delicate and light."

I looked at this creature. It laid sleeping on the platter like a miniature ape with a light covering of hair. Its face looked like a monkey and it had arms and legs like one. Not wanting to be too far out, I asked how often he got orders for this.

"It's a fairly new item but it has been making quite a hit. Lately it's been hard to keep enough swoot in stock. The most popular hostesses insist on having it as part of their menus."

"It looks way too large for my number of guests."

"I believe we have a couple of small swoot in stock. In any case, even if we have to special order, I'm certain we can accommodate your needs."

"I have no idea how to clean it and no way could I kill it!" I blurted, my voice rising an octave and squeaking. The thought of having to run after an active swoot, trying to kill it was something I found very hard to

conjure up.

"We can clean it for you at no extra charge so all that needs to be done is to season to taste and pop it into the oven," the man explained trying to allay my doubts.

We discussed the various details regarding number of pounds cooking time and temperature. Delivery was arranged for the morning of the big day.

Having done all that could be done the night before, I woke up early Thanksgiving Day wondering how everything would go. I worried all night about having ordered something so different, but if it was all the rage with the sophisticated hostesses of this town, it was sure to impress. The doorbell rang. It was two delivery men with the swoot. They placed it on the table I indicated and left.

There it was; this big lump, covering quite a large portion of my kitchen table. I had no idea that forty pounds of swoot would be so big. Well the only thing to do was to unwrap it.

*"There it was; this big lump, covering a large portion of my kitchen table."*

The paper came off the feet first. Gosh, it was so white. It had looked quite brown in the store, probably because it was still alive, but here it laid on my kitchen table, dead and white as a plucked chicken! I unwrapped the rest of it. Its chest and belly was opened and empty, its cavity ready for stuffing. The caterer had de-haired every inch of it. It looked like a little old man lying there. Obviously, it wouldn't fit into my one and only roasting pan. I took out a metal serving platter that had been a wedding present and wrapped it with foil. The swoot should just about fit on it. I would fashion a cover of foil so that it wouldn't burn and would cook evenly. It was very obviously a male. Maybe I should cut part of it away, say from mid-abdomen to the top of the thighs, which is the meatiest part. If I did that, I wouldn't have enough to feed all my guests. I decided to put the stuffing on it in such a way that it would cover its private parts, like a pair of BVD's. Yes, that's what I would do.

26 Using every box of stuffing I had I set about preparing it. Into the cavity went one quarter of it. The rest of the stuffing went to covering the hips and lower area. When finished, it looked decently "dressed."

Opening my warmed up apartment-sized oven, I lifted the pan and placed it on the rack. Pushing the length of it into the oven, the leading edge hit the back of the oven and wouldn't go any farther. The door wouldn't close! The head and shoulders stuck out. What was I going to do? In times of desperation, even the most illogical ideas seem rational. If I raised the temperature setting to the highest degree, maybe the half that was deepest in the oven would cook, and then I would turn it around and cook the other half. It just might work, it *had* to work!

Closing the door to the kitchen, I slaved away making the salad, cooking the vegetables, boiling the potatoes, preparing the relish tray, and slicing tomatoes. Over the next several hours, the kitchen got scorching hot. I hurried back and forth to and from the dining room, setting the tables,

placing water glasses, and putting napkins into napkin rings. My plan seemed to be working. The lower half of the swoot was browning nicely and the meat was getting tender. It was time to turn it around and let the top half cook. The next two hours would be mine to take a shower, wash my sweat-matted hair, and try to look fresh, relaxed, and in control.

When I entered the bedroom, my husband looked up from the newspaper he was reading in bed and commented on the wonderful aroma that had started to fill the apartment. I smiled at him and told him that the kitchen was off limits to him today and that I wanted everything to be a surprise.

Three hours later, everything was ready. Flowers were placed in vases around the apartment. The cooked swoot was on a platter in the middle of the dining room table, covered with several layers of foil. Guests had started to arrive and coats were being piled on our freshly-made bed. I had opened most of the apartment windows a bit to let the cool November air replace the heat of the kitchen. People milled around in conversation and introductions were made. My husband beamed with pride at the wonderful job I had done preparing everything.

The time came when the guests took their seats at the dining table. My husband insisted that I sit with the guests and he would take over as host. The moment was at hand. How would everyone react when the main course was presented? When I had taken the swoot from the oven, it was golden brown and smelled delicious. I had decided that I would keep a wrapping of foil over the head. It looked better that way.

My husband said a prayer, everyone saying "Amen" at the end. The carving knife was ready by his plate. He stood and reached out to unwrap the foil. I kept my eyes on the faces of my guests, hoping I would see smiles of approval.

The first reaction was that of my husband's aunt. She gasped and her hand flew to her mouth as she seemed to faint, her head landing on her plate. Next to her, her daughter,



about my age, unmarried but who had a large following of boyfriends, tried unsuccessfully to suppress her giggling. Her brother stared with an amused look on his face, shaking his head slowly. The faces of the other women turned beet red. One of them turned and buried her face on her husband's shoulder. My husband's expression was one of open-mouthed shock.

The swoot laid entirely exposed on the platter from the top of its head to its feet. The cool November air had evidently made several muscles react. On its face, the muscles around its mouth had contracted into a grimace and its eyes were squeezed shut. The stuffing had settled and out of the middle of it stood a very large erection. Its hands were curved into fists and its toes were curled under. It looked stiff as a board and frozen in the last throws of passion.

I sat very still in my chair. Then all the tension of the last several days seemed to close in on me and my body started to shake as I began to laugh. It built into a crescendo to where I could only draw a quick breath before I laughed my lungs empty again.

I felt my husband's arms around me, rocking me gently back and forth. "Barbara... Barbara!" he murmured. "What's the matter, honey?" He snuggled up closer to my back. Kissing my neck softly, he nuzzled my shoulder.

"I'm so sorry, honey," I cried. "You must be so ashamed of me. And I tried so hard to do it right."

"What in the world are you talking about?"

Glancing at the clock, it was 3:30 a.m.. I jumped up from the bed and hurried to the kitchen. There, inside the refrigerator, sat the thawed turkey, patiently waiting for me. I never saw anything so beautiful in my life. The disastrous feast had been just a bad dream!

No matter what happened now, it was going to be a wonderful day!

### **Cows Eat Grass But. . . .**

**How would it feel if a cow ate you?  
Caught you, and bopped you, and chopped you in two  
Baked you, or broiled you, or put you in stew  
With a carrot, potato, and an onion or two  
So when you sit down to eat, and you are starting to  
chew  
Put down your steak and ponder this through**

**How would it feel if a cow ate you?**

*John Szipszky*

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## Winners of the South Campus

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### Everglades

Storm clouds  
settle on a quiet plain grasses blow  
in circular patterns

A single Seminole  
in the distance  
appears to stand  
motionless -  
he can hear the water flow  
feel the pulse of life  
sustained

Born here too  
water is in my blood  
I pour it out  
and waste it  
without thought

Executives  
in boardrooms discuss  
concrete structures  
as I open the tap to make coffee

The Everglades flow from the tap -  
crocodiles and herons  
stare at me in surprise  
the Seminole chants -

I can hear the flow  
feel the pulse of the water  
that sustains us



### Off-Key

look closely. even the  
trees squirm with bore-  
dom. the very air rots  
with stiff indifference.  
the windows all stare  
back at me, sighing. thru  
the haze a lonesome pigeon  
convulses with disease &  
clutches at the telephone  
wires of the world, placidly  
wondering why the echoes  
no longer cease.

step lightly.  
i've misplaced hope.  
now that i bed with delirium  
there is  
nothing.

not a tongue with which  
to lick the suppurating  
boils that decorate my  
heart. nor even a heart  
to lick.





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# Literary Competition

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## Shadows

I see so many shadows every night  
Sometimes these shadows give me some fright,  
Most of the time these shadows give me joy  
For now that I realize it was an emotional toy.

I see this little shadow wherever I may be  
I always seem to realize the shadow's watching  
me,  
I hear this little shadow even when I sleep  
The shadow tells me someday that we will  
hope to meet.

I sit back and wonder who the shadow may be  
For what I can figure or only see,  
It seems to be my grandfather looking over  
me.

We never met in person  
We only met in soul,  
And now I finally realize,  
His heart is made of gold.

**3rd Place**

*Jeanette Kahn*



*Untitled B&W Photograph by NGuyen Vu Minh*



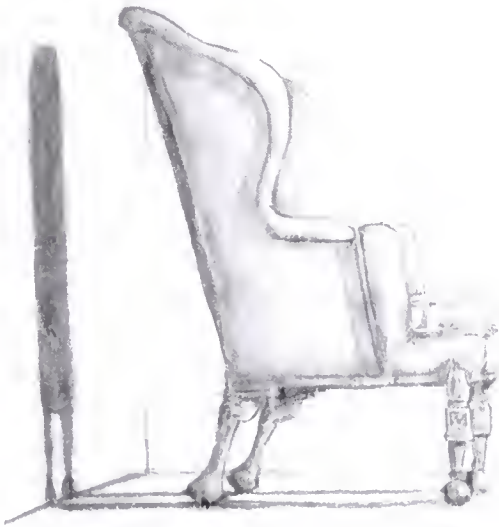
*"Perspective" Charcoal Drawing by Laura O' Toole*



If Only I Could;  
By a Grandmother

I would hop on my magic broom  
and sweep from the skies  
all the dirty things that are stinging your eyes.  
I would mend the hole in the ozone layer  
and filter all murky waters  
so that healthy fish would swim.  
Wars would be ancient history.  
Children of all colors would be as one,  
playful, fed and clean.  
They would play in lakes so clear  
they could stand in water up to their chins  
and watch their toes wiggle between schools of minnows.  
As once I did.  
The vegetables they'd enjoy  
the apples to crunch  
would come from soil free of pesticides.  
And when it comes to time to breathe my last breath  
if only I could have done one of these things,  
having opened the road to a better world  
I would go to my other life in peace.  
Monitored not by machines, but by nature only.

*Evelyn Weinberg*









*"The Fallen" Acrylic on Canvas by David Stiffler*

# INTERVIEW WITH VICKI HENDRICKS *By Rena Register*

34 "GET HOT WITHOUT GETTING BURNED! - READ *MIAMI PURITY*," That's what read on the banner, dragged across the sky, to advertise Vicki Hendricks' novel. Recent international publication of her steamy first novel, *Miami Purity*, has placed her name on book shelves world wide. Vicki Hendricks has been an English Professor at Broward Community College since 1982. She received her Master's of Fine Arts in creative writing from Florida International University in 1992. *Miami Purity* has been promoted as containing sex, violence, and perversion. It includes all of these things, along with a psychological complexity which is entertaining and refreshing. She has given a common theme new depth. Vicki's creative writing students view her as a friend and mentor. She has supported the creative writing efforts of the students of Broward Community College by holding literary competitions on campus and encouraging her students to submit their work for publication. Vicki lives part-time in Key West and has a sailboat docked in Ft. Lauderdale. She is currently working on her next novel, *Iguana Love*. I was fortunate to find Vicki in her office between classes and publicity commitments.

**Rena:** Congratulations on the publication of your first novel, *Miami Purity*. I'm sure you worked hard. Do you feel that writing is a natural born talent?

**Vicki:** I don't think it's natural at all. I think that's one of the big misunderstandings about writing; it causes endless problems because people think that you either have it or you don't. That's not all true. You do have to have some enjoyment of the language and understanding of human nature. As far as developing technique and learning how to write, that's something that just takes time. If you're not a reader, I don't think you have a chance of being a writer, because you're starting out at such a disadvantage. You could never catch up to all the readers who are writers. It would be impossible because they've absorbed all this stuff throughout the years. You would have to learn this by some other method. Why would you even want to write, if you didn't care about reading? But I do find people who think they can be writers without reading. I just don't know where they get that idea.

**Rena:** I understand your first novel, *Miami Purity*, was actually your master's thesis. How do you feel about the creative writing programs in the colleges?

**Vicki:** I think there are some wonderful programs. I can't speak for other ones, but the program I attended at FIU has lots of caring and skillful writers. They are capable of giving you techniques and ideas that would probably take you years to find on your own. You can absorb a lot from your own reading, but a lot of times you really can't analyze the writing enough to see what people are doing. I think it's a real short cut to be able to have people who can work at things and tell you about the techniques used in the writing.

**Rena:** Do you feel workshops and peer reviews are good ways for a beginner to improve their style?

**Vicki:** Yes, you get to see what other people are doing wrong when you're in workshops and that can keep you from making those mistakes. On the other hand, you get a lot of misinformation in workshops because there are all sorts of opinions, and a lot of those opinions are not yet formed in a way that's really helpful. So, you have to be good at sorting out what opinions are worth listening to and what ones aren't; and that's difficult.

**Rena:** Do you agree with the adage "Show, don't tell" in writing?



**Vicki:** Definitely! You can really see it in my own writing because I do very little telling. My writing is almost all action, dialogue and movement as it is taking place. There are very few writers, I think, that are good enough to actually just give their own thoughts. Most people are going to show you things, and then, you get the meaning from what they're showing you.

**Rena:** What is the advice you give your students for character development?

**Vicki:** I just have to say what I do, which is to put the character in a situation and have that character react. You can do a lot of thinking and writing down of characteristics before you even start, but for me, that doesn't work. The character does something, which causes the character to do something else. In the back of my mind I have an idea of how this person feels and what are the basic problems and basic goals. You have to know the goals of the character right off the bat. I think the finer points of the characters develop through their actions toward this goal. Also, you tend to take characteristics of people you know. This works if you combine the two somehow. I wouldn't take a regular whole person and use that person as a character. My main character, in *Miami Purity*, probably is a combination of four people; some of them are male and some of them are female.

It's just a matter of selecting the parts from each and working them into the character.

**Rena:** Do you feel formal research is important for authenticity? Do you research your characters?



Photo by Rena Register

**Vicki:** I don't like to, but it's a necessity. With the dry cleaner, in *Miami Purity*, I went to two different dry cleaners and hung out for a couple of days. I got little charts with what to use to get stains out, learned about the equipment, and everything, so I would be able use that for the characters to hurt

each other. Right now, my nurse is a scuba diver and body builder. Not being a nurse, caused a lot of terminology problems. I had to do research. I don't have much knowledge on body building either, although I've done a few weights in the gym, but I had to get all this research on steroids.

**Rena:** Do you encourage creative writing students to revise?

**Vicki:** Revision is the most important thing. If you just write one draft, that's when you have crap, no doubt. Nothing is ever good on the first draft. It is without complexity. The story always has to be revised, and anyone who says they don't revise, I think is just lying. I've heard writers say that something is a gift once in a while, just given to them, they write it out and it doesn't need much revision. Most of the time, a good novel needs several revisions. Your second draft is usually when you discover what your story is about. On the first draft, you usually don't know that. You're searching for the story as you're writing.

**Rena:** What are your views on censorship?

**Vicki:** I don't believe in it. I don't like certain types of things, but I don't think I should impose my viewpoint on other people. Probably, there are some limits,

but I don't want to be the one to make them; like child pornography or something. It's hard to say that people should be allowed to use child pornography and of course they shouldn't actually use children. As far as writing about it, I wouldn't want to say that people can't write about it. It just wouldn't be to my taste. Censorship, in general, makes me want to go against it. It gets down to an issue of free will for me. Censorship makes you question yourself more and you probably, ultimately, do cut some things that you would put in there if you stop to think about it.

**Rena:** The sexual content of your novel has bothered some people. Your editor, for instance, cut some of the sexually explicit scenes. Does that affect your writing now?

**Vicki:** Well, I hate to admit, it's already affected my writing, because now I build the sex scenes in such a way that they can't possibly be touched. It's not a major part, I guess, but there is sort of a sexual subplot. Sherri was not trying to get anything from anyone; it was just a pure physical, natural, kind of wholesome act to her. So I didn't see why he would cut that and not worry about the murder, the incest, whatever else. *Miami Purity* wasn't edited very much for sexual content other than some repetition that was cut. I agreed with most of the cuts.

**Rena:** Do you enjoy the shock value of your stories?

**Vicki:** I think I do enjoy the shock value. I didn't realize that until I did it, maybe. In a way, I guess I always thought it would be shocking and that might be fun for my thesis. I never thought that anyone else would be reading the book, that it would be published, that my mother would see it. My mother became a kind of a humorous motif during my publicity tour. I started out by telling how my mother had asked me whether I got the information for the book through experience or research. I tried to carry it over into most of my interviews, just because people thought it was kind of funny. Now, when I write, I really do think of my mother saying, "Vicki?" every time I write a sentence. Maybe I'm not as bold as before, when it wasn't a realistic problem of public exposure.

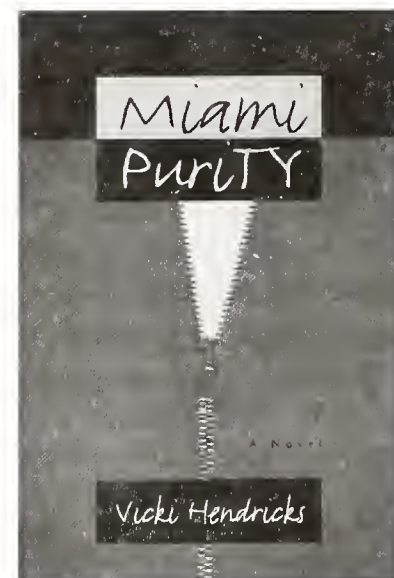
**Rena:** After publication of your first novel, is there a lot of pressure to produce?

**Vicki:** That's a new pressure for me to think about. There is a lot of pressure. I think most of the pressure is because now, I risk failure. Before, I never expected to get published and therefore, there was no possibility of failing. Taking creative writing courses and going to writing workshops; nobody really expects to get published or to make any money. Now, after having done that, I feel that I have to do it again,

or getting published was just pure luck. I'll feel worse than ever, if I can't do it again.

**Rena:** What would you say to those of us who aspire to be writers?

**Vicki:** Just start writing! You don't have to show it to anyone. When you write poorly, you usually know it's poor. You have to get through writing poorly to get to something better. Maybe you can't save much of it, or you end up cutting the whole thing, at least something is developing in your mind. I think writer's block is being too much of a perfectionist; refusing to put down things that you know aren't very good. You may write crap, but, you must keep writing. That's the way I look at it.





# Developmental Mathematics

*Sandra Levy*

## Formulas

$$\text{Mother} \left| \frac{\text{Need}}{\text{child}} \right.$$

$$\frac{\text{Need} + \text{Abandonment}}{\text{Separation Anxiety}}$$

$$\times \frac{\text{Anxiety} \text{ Rejection}}{\text{Pain}}$$

$$\frac{\text{Pain} - \text{Trust}}{\text{Me}}$$

## Fractions

$$\frac{\text{You} + \text{Control}}{\text{me}} \cdot \frac{\text{me}}{\text{You}} = \text{BROKENNESS}$$

No !! These formulas and fractions  
I could not comprehend.  
The mathematics of my life was too complex.  
I lacked the basic skills to calculate the damage.  
It took me time to practice ,  
to accept the results and grasp the concept that,  
according to you ---

## Results

$$\left( \frac{4 \text{ Wrongs}^2 - \text{Two Wrongs}^4}{\div \text{ by YOUR Formula}} \right) = \text{Always made you right}$$

(Four wrongs squared, minus two wrongs  
to the fourth power, divided by your formula)

*Sandra Levy*

It was five o'clock in the infested streets of Manhattan. Men and women filled Fifth Avenue on their way home from another grueling day in the corporate world. They all made it through the acute levels of stress seemingly unaffected. All except one, his name, Van

Synner. He was a top executive for a public relations firm in the city. Now, while the avenue filled with commuters below, Van contemplated his existence, high above the toiling street, with his back pressed against the window ledge. He looked down at the crowd gathering below. They were peering and pointing up at him like spectators at some circus high wire show. Van laughed at their grade school mentality. Someone yelled up at him, "Hey buddy you gonna jump or what cause I gotta get home!"

Van yelled back, "Why don't you come up here and jump with me, apparently your life is worse than mine." A slew of laughter rose up at him, and the man below threw an unpleasant finger gesture Van's way.

His secretary, Valerie Dulltree, pushed open the window next to him and yelled, "My God, Van, are you crazy? Get off the ledge." Van looked over at her while her annoying accent rang through his ears. He could not believe that he had an affair with this woman, who now stood there watching him in a pink sweater that was too small for her.

Van said, rather convincingly he thought, "Get back inside or I'll throw myself off this God damned building." She quickly drew back into the building, and her eyes began to fill with tears. Van resented that she still obsessed over him. He only kept her on because she threatened to tell his wife about the affair if he let her go. He never wanted his wife to find out about his infidelity. He loved her. He had only cheated on her because their marriage had lost its spark, and



*David McGuekian*

he had been feeling insecure over his thinning hair and increasing waistline. He did not enjoy his life. To him, it no longer had any meaning, so he decided to end it.

Then the window next to him opened again, and his secretary appeared in the open frame. She had always been sort

of a child to Van, but now she looked very headstrong and sure of herself. She began, "Van if you don't come down off that ledge I will come out there and drag you down myself!"

"Drag me down? Why you've already done that, that's why I'm out here in the first place."

She glared at him with contempt. "Listen, I have done nothing to you. I never told your wife of our affair, nor have I ever tried to do anything, but help you through your pathetic mid-life crisis."

Van quickly rebutted, "If that was completely true you would be collecting unemployment right now."

"That's right. I'm not going to lose my job just because you no longer want to fuck me."

"Well you won't have to worry about me firing you anymore, because I quit this job and my pathetic life as well." Van pushed off the window again, and the crowd fell silent at the sight of Van looming over the ledge. They quickly booed him when he stopped his forward progression just short of falling.

"Stop this," Valerie cried, and she stormed out onto the ledge after him. Her hair looked mangled by the steady stormy streams of singing winds blowing through it. She looked possessed to him. Van realized she was going to try to drag him in. He began side-stepping further down the narrowing ledge. She followed after him, stopping only to remove her heels, before the ledge became too thin for her to move onto. Van yelled for her to stop at once. He begged



her, "Please, the ledge is too narrow for my feet."

"Why should I stop, so you can keep this game up and worry the rest of us to death?"

Van replied in a shaky voice, "No, I'm really scared... can barely breathe up here." His face filled with terror, and his voice sounded like a child's. "Please don't come out here any further, I'll fall." Van's footing had become unsure, and he could see all the people with their nosy eyes watching him, awaiting his death. But Van was not sure he wanted to die anymore. He was getting older, but he still had a wife, a mother, and many years left in him. He was not ready to fall now, down into the dirty streets, satisfying the hordes below, but the wind howled horribly heavy from the heavens around him, trying to drag him off to his death. The violent storm cloud that had loomed there, for seemingly an eternity and began to shake the earth with thunder. He pleaded to Valerie, "Please go, go and call my wife, tell her, please tell her that I love her." Valerie went to comment but he cut her off, "Go now and make sure she knows I loved her." Valerie reluctantly left to fulfill his last wish for him.

Valerie Amanda Dulltree was a strong willed woman, who knew exactly how to manipulate men. Being the daughter of a pushy Brooklynier, she was well prepared for a life in the corporate world. The fact that it was mostly a world controlled by men never seemed to bother her much. She didn't want to be in control anyway. She only wanted not to be controlled. She had survived unscratched in the dog eat dog world around her, until Van Synner walked into her life. He was like a lost little boy to her. Ironically he viewed her in the same way, but that was exactly the way she wanted to seem to him, helpless. She was on her way up, and Van was going to be her vehicle.

They had started out casually. At first they had lunches in the city and went for walks in Central Park, but gradually things became more serious between them. Valerie fell into the affair by accident. Her policy was never to get involved

with married men, especially the ones above her. It happened though. She fell in love with his little boy quality. Their breakup devastated her. She felt alone in the world without him. Now, for him, she found herself dialing the number of the woman whose husband she had been having an affair with.

She felt weighted with guilt, as she informed her naive listener of the situation. "Hello, Mrs. Synner?" Valerie asked as she heard the familiar voice she had hung up on so many times in the past.

"Yes, speaking."

"Mrs. Synner, it's your husband."

"What about my husband?"

"He's out on the ledge of his office building threatening to jump."

"Oh my God. What do you mean he is out on the ledge trying to jump?" Mary replied in disbelief.

"Try not to get upset, but he asked me to call you and tell you that he loves you, in the event that something should happen," she said in a calm detached voice. She could hear Mary begin to cry. Valerie tried to comfort her. "I'm going to call the police and the fire department. They'll get him down. If not, I will."

"I want to see him. Tell him I'm on my way... Tell him I'm coming," blurted Mary in a choked voice.

Valerie replied, "I will." She hung up the receiver and dialed the police. The police told her to stay where she was at and not attempt to go out on the ledge after him, but Valerie knew that he was in trouble. "New York cops never know how to deal with delicate situations." She went over to a window on the east side of the building and pulled herself out to the ledge. She decided she would have to retrieve him herself, so she carefully began sliding her way toward the south side of the building where Van stood. The fire engines had arrived on the scene by then, and Van's audience went from the curious crowd to vicious hecklers, imploring him to

jump to his death. All the while, fire trucks prepared to clear the streets and catch him, in case he was really as crazy as his frantic secretary said he was. The police seized the office building, and there was one of the firm's p.r. guys on hand for damage control; just like Van had done so many times in the past.

He thought of what his father would think of him now. "I'm no better than the politicians. I represent nothing but smoke and mirrors," Van murmured in disgust. He leaned forward feeling almost sick at the thought of himself. He could see down the side of the tall building, and suddenly, he realized how far up he was. His body froze for a moment in fear, and he pressed himself hard against the plate glass window behind him.

The setting sun warmed his face, as he stood there on the windy ledge, watching the crowd, hearing their cruel taunts. He thought, "The only time the city was beautiful was when the descending sun high-lights the pollution in the sky." The sky painted itself with golden hues of orange and red. They reminded him of his early childhood when the setting sun meant supper with the family that he loved. He thought of his mother, who would await his father's return from work, sometimes for hours. They were always pleased to see him arrive in his elegant suit with the matching briefcase. His life was so simple and without concern then. A chill came over him when he realized, his own wife would be awaiting his return. "How long would she wait before hearing the news of my death?" Van wondered aloud.

His spirit stirred a deep reverie inside him until the thunderous crack of a lightning bolt startled him. The sky became dark and terrible with storm clouds that seemed to swallow the sky above him. The people began holding their hats to their heads as the howling wind pushed its way through the maze of sky scrapers, but it was not enough to distract

their interest in his high wire act. They held fast with their eyes glued to him.

Meanwhile, Van looked up at the clouds and began to plead for mercy from God. "Please God, if you have any compassion, deliver me from this ledge and take me home once more to my beloved." Thunder rang out as a bolt of lightning flashed through the sky. Van continued, "Forgive me for I have sinned, . . . can't a man repent even if on the verge of death?" The giant omnipotent cloud opened up and it began to pour. The people in the streets scurried under the shelter of various overhangs as the rain came shunting

down. The water pounded Van's face. With each cleansing drop, he felt renewed and revived from his sorrows. He tasted the water running over his lips and it was as sweet as the juice from many fruits.

He peered into the sky, and faces began appearing in the clouds above him. Beautiful women with voices like the sirens of long ago, and with long, wild, whipping, whirling wet strands of hair that stretched unto the earth.

They came out welcoming him, calling him to join them in their seductive orgy. The most pleasant of the angels came down beside him on the ledge. She

was magically beautiful. He reached out with one of his hands and felt her soft silky skin with a devilish curiosity. The goddess turned and outstretched her hand, which he took gladly, and they stepped from the narrow life-preserving ledge. Suddenly, he felt his stomach drop like the feeling one gets in an elevator, and the woman's hand became stone. Van found himself holding the ledge with one arm while trying to release the statuesque body of the lustful whore that had seduced him with the other. The other sirens became terribly angry specters that began throwing hail down upon him from heaven, draining the strength from the lonely hand that preserved his life. Van looked away from the hideous demons above

*"The setting sun warmed his face, as he stood there on the windy ledge, watching the crowd, hearing their cruel taunts."*



him and focused on the crowd below that had reappeared from the overhangs to witness his fall.

The rain came down hard on the building and the sky was a swirl with gray and black clouds. She made her way over to the narrow spot where Van was pressed up against for his life.

"Van," called Valerie. "I spoke to Mary . . . she's coming here to see you." He seemed not to hear her, he only kept his eyes glued to the tumultuous sky above them. She moved next to him on the ledge. "Van?" she called again trying to get his attention. Suddenly he reached over to her and felt her rain moistened face. His eyes, a deep blue in color, seemed to look right through her as if peering at her soul. Not knowing

how to react, she reached for his hand. It felt cold with fear. She turned to lead him off the ledge; when suddenly her feet slipped out from beneath her. Her muscular frame smacked into the hard ledge, and she bounced off pulling Van down with her. He grabbed a hold of the ledge on his descent toward the pavement, but the weight of her body in his hand and the slipperiness of the ledge caused him to lose his grip. Their bodies descended rapidly, and they landed hard, crushing in the roof of a new Mercedes Benz. The car's horn rang out continuously, and the crowd gathered around like vultures surrounding a carcass. The clouds above dissipated and the sun moved completely beyond the horizon. Mary arrived moments later finding the two of them together . . . once again.



*"Versace" B&W Photograph by Eynat Tauber*

*Three poems by Jerry Hahn* .....

Loving in the Dark

Warmth all over  
Your skin against mine  
Soft caressing strokes  
Excited tremors fill my body  
Musky mysterious odor  
The sweat between two bodies  
Cologne and perfume mixing  
Scents mingled as one  
Salty moist surfaces  
Each kiss a different taste  
Strawberries for dessert  
Your tongue meets mine  
Deep breaths drawing in lingering sighs  
Escaping light giggles now and then  
Three words repeated "I love you"  
Again and again

Homophobic Scissors

When you bite back  
With cutting sarcasm  
I bleed

I'm not infallible  
You don't seem to realize

Effortlessly  
On shear will  
You cut my  
self-confidence  
To ribbons

Words fly through the air  
To stab and lacerate  
Your scissors kill

.....



## To Future Generations,

I saw daylight for the last time  
On March 6, 1940.

They came in large numbers,  
The entire neighborhood  
Sealed off.

Like hounds ready to kill  
The sleeping foxes.

Black steel enforced combat boots  
Kicked down our door,  
They charged forward  
Like ancient Greek soldiers  
About to sack Troy.

Mother was shot first,  
As her lifeless body  
Fell back,  
Sunlight from the open  
Window caught a quick glimpse  
Of her wedding diamond,  
A temporary blindness filled the room.  
A captive angel  
Was set free.

Father was next  
Crumbs from warm toast  
Still on his moustache,  
As his body danced across  
The room from the force

Of six bullets.  
I was forced to watch  
My eyelids pinched up  
By hard leather SS  
Gloves.

Why did this happen?  
We helped a Jewish  
Family escape to Berlin.  
I was also accused  
Of violating Paragraph 175.  
I was outed by an old  
Boyfriend's father,  
Desperately making the attempt  
To cleanse his good son's  
Honor.  
The claim, rape.

Paragraph 175 repeated  
Over and over

"A male who indulges  
in criminally indecent  
activities with another  
male who allows himself  
to participate in such  
activities will be punished."

I was sent to Sachsenhausen  
The Auschwitz for homosexuals.  
I had to wear a camp regulated

Pink triangle on the upper left  
Side of my grey coveralls.

We were separated from the other  
Prisoners, in a "queer block"  
At night, we could only  
Sleep in nightshirts  
Hands had to be kept  
Outside our blankets,  
To prevent masturbating.

No matter what the weather  
Pink triangles were forced  
To push big cars filled with  
Clay, from the pits to the brick  
Making machines.  
Three miles up, Three miles down.  
No mistakes were  
Allowed.

After the war, many gay survivors  
Had no families left.  
We no longer wear  
A stigmatic pink triangle,  
But we are marked  
For life.

# FIRST LOVE

*Benjamin C. Wilson*

44 It was May 24, 1994, and it was the one year anniversary for me and my girlfriend, Nicole. I was eager to see her since I had been busy all week, so we made plans to go out that night. I arrived at her house around, six o'clock, and Nicole had left just a few minutes earlier. She went to the mall to buy me an anniversary present. An hour had passed and Nicole was still not back. I felt like something had gone wrong. The mall was only a few minutes away, and Nicole knew that I was going to be there early to pick her up. Her mother and I were getting more worried by the minute, and after another thirty minutes of waiting we were about to go looking for her; then the phone rang and her mother answered with a worried tone in her voice. Her mother looked at me with a grim and empty expression as she talked to the other person on the line. She never said a word and after a few minutes of silence she hung up the phone. Immediately her mother's eyes filled up with tears and she began to cry. She grabbed me and told me that we had to go get Nicole.

I was terrified and didn't know what to do or say. We got into my car and began to drive. The drive seemed like it took forever, but in reality we only had to drive less than five miles. When we pulled up I could see what was the aftermath of a very terrible accident involving two cars. As I got out of the car I was shaking and didn't notice until taking a few steps towards the accident that one of the cars looked a lot like the Firebird that Nicole often drove. Her mother rushed out of the car and tried to get to Nicole, but she was stopped by a police officer. She was panicking hysterically and had to be restrained.

I continued to walk towards the scene, and when I was close enough to see both cars I was overwhelmed with a feeling of fear. A police officer approached me and I told him my name. He asked me if I knew a girl named Nicole Kent. I took a deep breath and told the police officer I did, and he told me that Nicole was the girl in the car and she had been asking for me for the past few minutes. He asked me if I would try and keep her calm by talking to her so that the paramedics and fire rescue could do their best to get her out. I

clinched my fists and started to walk towards the scene of the accident.

The first thing that I saw when I approached the car was Nicole; she was trapped underneath the dashboard of the car, lying in broken glass. I was shocked and almost fainted because the smell of blood and the sight of her lying there in pain was overwhelming, but I knew that she needed me. I could tell that she was badly hurt. I knelt down beside her, and I began to talk to her to try and keep her calm. The worst part of her body was her face; it was covered with bits and pieces of glass and there was blood all over her mouth and cheeks. Her eyes were just as bad, empty, lifeless, and filled with tears. The life that used to be in her eyes wasn't there anymore, and it was replaced with pain and fear. Her hands were covered with gauze and her chest was wrapped in a white blanket. She was shivering, and every time that the paramedics tried to move her into a different position she would yell out in pain. The once beautiful girl that I had loved for such a long time was now scarred for life by the stupidity of an incompetent driver.

Once she noticed that I was there she immediately stopped panicking and grabbed a hold of my hand. Her breathing slowed down to a normal rate, and she looked up at me as if she had something to tell me. She leaned her head towards me and put it on my shoulder. She tried to speak, and I tried to keep her from talking, but she didn't want to stay quiet. She asked me to lean over to her, and give her a kiss. I wasn't sure if I should, but I did anyway. Before I kissed her I closed my eyes so I couldn't see how badly she was hurt. As I gently pressed my lips against hers, I could feel that her lips were very tender and sensitive. I could tell that it hurt her to kiss me back. As I pulled away, she gently put her hand on my face and told me that she loved me; then she put her hand down and rested her head on my shoulder once again. She took my hand in hers and held onto it tightly. She held my hand tighter with each passing moment, and I could tell that the pain was getting to the point that she would not be able to take it anymore. I wasn't sure what I was supposed to say, so I just kept



on telling her that everything was going to be fine. Deep down inside I wasn't sure if was telling the truth or not.

After twenty minutes, the rescue team was able to free Nicole from the mangled car. The paramedics worked fast and quickly got her into the ambulance. I was still holding onto her hand, and I asked if I could ride in the back with Nicole; the paramedic looked up at me and noticed that I was crying. It seemed like he knew that it was important to me so he allowed me to stay with her. The ride to the hospital felt like it took forever. Every minute that we drove was a minute off her life. When the ambulance finally arrived at the hospital, I was told to go to the waiting room. They did all that they could for her, but her body was badly traumatized by the accident. Only a few moments had passed when the doctor came out to tell her parents that Nicole had died. When I heard her mother start to cry uncontrollably, I knew that Nicole was gone. She was pronounced dead on arrival.

Two days later was the viewing, and I was one of the first to arrive. I kneeled down by the casket next to her mother, and we began to cry. The next day was the funeral, and all of her friends showed up to pay their last respects to Nicole. There were so many people there that the funeral home was filled up to the point that people were standing outside. When it came time to bury her, I knew for sure that she was gone forever.

To this day I don't know why she was taken from me the way she was. Nicole was unlike anybody I had ever met in my life; she said things to me that no one ever told me, and she made me feel a way that I never felt before. She loved me for who I was and never asked me to be anything or anyone else. She accepted me for who I was and loved me in a way that I will always remember. She touched my life in such a way that to this day I still think about her a lot. It has taken me a whole year to be able to deal with her death and accept it. I know that in time I will be able to look back on our time together and smile instead of sigh. I will always remember her and I will keep her love in my heart forever.



*Untitled B&W Photograph by Nancy Anderson*



*"Golden Relaxation" Photograph by Eynat Tauber*

## Fantasy

Is perfection in my grasp?  
 Many loves lived then lost.  
 None so perfect as my  
 Hope Chest of Dreams.  
 Fantasies -  
 Fantasies played in my mind,  
 My heart.  
 No realism to paint my world happy.  
 Realism -  
 Will it ever be real?  
 Real love, Real joy,  
 Tangible happiness.  
 Desirable Heart,  
 You'll always be grieving.  
 Sprinkled with happiness,  
 Yet pounded with pain.  
 Carved in your being are  
 the cracks of your sorrow.  
 Heartbreak  
 So easily gained,  
 But what about love?  
 What mysterious spell must  
 be cast or broken in order to gain  
 This hidden possession?  
 Ungraspable,  
 Pacify yourself with fantasies of  
 Love.

*Doris G. Ruiz*



# A War Poem from the Klingon Empire

by *Ka Lian Tai Laurensith* (Kesson Kennedy)

*lo Dn I Qapla' nej*

*Maj jaj Heh  
pongma' qem batlh  
jag jah  
bortas nej - WIH  
qaSta HvIS wa'SanID DIS vay' tIchmeH  
pong lo' jaj jaghmey lI'  
qaw -  
Maj jaj HehreH*



Seek Success Brother

Today is a good day to die  
Bring honor to our name  
Go Boldly  
Seek revenge, be ruthless  
Let the enemies curse you for 1,000 years  
Remember -  
Today is always a good day to die.



*"Rock n' Roll is Dead" Graphite Drawing by Mario Lapi*



## Battered Child

Battered child, black and blue  
Her life is shattered  
Because of you  
A fragmented mind, torn apart  
She shivers in the cold  
Clutching a broken heart  
The lost one lives  
Hiding in her hole  
Abandoned at birth  
She's a shattered soul  
A piece of china  
In pieces she lies  
Choking on nighttime sobs  
The grief in her cries.

How could you beat me?  
I tried so hard!  
In a heap like trash,  
My life marred.  
When the child cried  
Where did you go?  
I hid in terror,  
But I loved you so.

Like painted confusion  
An abstract art  
Rituals of torture  
A hellish start  
Big bad me  
I cower in fear  
You turn your face and pound your fists  
Not even looking at my tears.

*Tracy Duguay*



*Untitled B & W Photograph by Beth Hinds*

## The Ocean

The ocean is salt and blood  
that pulses in a rhythm  
like the primal dance  
of one hundred crazed natives -  
That is life experienced first hand;  
lived through the magic  
that the ocean carries  
within its blue eyes

A power is carried  
on the sea breeze  
that could cause you  
to just let go -

When floating in a black foam  
of tepid champagne  
silly things can happen...  
The sea breeze has the power  
to cause fire  
the stars spell cryptic messages  
of impossibility -  
The ocean is my heart  
beating through my tears

*Rena Register*



*"Tanks" Photo Transfer by Pat Taback*

## Always Stash a Bottle

I  
keep a  
wasp nest,  
above  
my bed,  
alive and humming.  
Translucent wings,  
insect hearts,  
beating, pumping.  
For me,  
the pain of  
a thousand stings,  
could not compete,  
with terror wrought,  
by eight small feet.  
I believe that  
just one spider crawling  
across the face of sleep,  
could surely cause my death.  
I  
keep a  
wasp nest,  
above  
my bed.

*Gary Herman*

## Who Knows It?

For most of my life,  
I searched for that word  
The word is so simple,  
It is constantly heard  
This word is quite common,  
It is known world wide  
Everyone will say it,  
There is nothing to hide  
Every musician has sung it,  
At least a thousand times  
A poet will write it,  
To put a meaning in rhymes  
We've thought we had found it,  
Many times in our past  
But reality came,  
So the word wouldn't last  
If we ever find it,  
We won't let it go  
Someone will hear it,  
That person will know  
You already know,  
This word stated above  
But do you really know  
The eternal meaning of love?

*Scott Schindler*



# One child...Ebola

*La Sonya Jackson*

One child to carry the pain of an entire village  
on his shoulders  
Quietly he watches, careful never to speak  
Watching as his people fall-  
still- they fall and still they lay  
death taking for consumption - his people  
her name...

## *Ebola*

From his raw hide hut he peers through a tiny torn hole  
Careful never to speak  
Watching the elders go by  
With barefeet and heads  
Ascending into the heavens  
Barefoot they chant and they pray for answers

## *Ebola*

On their shoulders a wooden box being carried  
Up and over a grassless hill to rest...  
Over and into the sunset the box will rest.

## *Ebola*

Through the tiny hole whiffs of sweet incense and  
herbs  
Dust to dust,  
Incense falling from the hands of the elders  
Covering their path, cleansing footsteps previously  
Taken

In his rawhide hut a child on all four,  
Kneeling, clenching the earth...  
Digging into the dry, hot, earth.  
Little clayed hands of one child to  
Carry the path of an entire village.

## *Ebola*

Through the top of his rawhide hut peers light  
A light after sunset, a light of hope.  
Light exalting the diamonds that have emerged from his eyes  
He prays, he cries, he hopes.  
One child to carry the pain of an entire village on his shoulders

Dancing... experience the moons  
fullness,  
dance to the light.  
Roaming underground, serpents  
Abound  
Take the moon  
Take the night  
Twisting desires,  
the snakes of evil  
Eyes of green liquid pouring  
in your element,  
Screams throughout the lands  
-Wrap your serpent legs 'round  
my reptile skin-  
blue sky in my head covered  
with clouds  
of sin  
rushing through  
my veins,  
Thought of immaculate angel arise  
from  
the black birds flying in circles  
over my  
bed.  
Forgotten angels of lust  
dance in my head.  
black birds turn to white  
Scent of a scene  
a senseless dream,  
engulfed we are torn  
pulled through the dawn's fury  
the night is gone.

53

*Mario Lapi*



*"Blood Bath" Ink Drawing by Zabrina Carpio*

## Living Nightmare

Footsteps down the hall in the middle of the night,

Body frozen with tremendous fright.

The eyes flaring, filled with fire,

That once saw her with intense desire.

The words of love that came from his breath,

Now steaming air becoming her death.

*Melinda Pfeiffer*





*"Blue Eyes II" Acrylic on Canvas by Arnulfo Corpus*

# *The Best Kept Secret*

*Shosharona Charlton*

I once had a friend, but her name I shall not say. We were the best of friends and shared everything with each other . . . well, almost everything. She was a great runner and a captivating poet. She gave love and kindness to everyone she met. She, like everyone else, had big dreams of the future and everything in it . . . that is, everyone except for herself.

56 She never made any plans for the future or anything else. She had no desire to go to any of the school dances or formal events. She claimed to be a hitchhiker on the road of life, and proclaimed that she would get off on the final curve. Her father was a drug-user and her mother was nowhere to be found. She had disappeared when my friend was at the age of five.

The only thing she knew about her mother was that she was once a very talented poet. My best-friend was very popular in school and was adored by everyone. She was involved in after school activities and in various amounts of volunteer services. Even so, she didn't have too many close friends. One day, while we were having lunch, she told me that she had been to see a psychiatrist and that even though the doctor said that she was OK, my dear friend admitted to me that she felt as if she was ready to get off on the final curve of life.

She asked me if I could keep a secret . . . a secret that she had kept to herself since she was nine years

old. No one could prepare me for what she was about to confess to me. But before she told me her secret, I promised to never share the next up-coming words with anyone else, not even the psychiatrist. We made a vow of silence and she revealed her compassionate secret.

Tears began to run down her face as she gasped on each word she uttered out of her mouth. I was stunned. I thought that I had known her and her father so well. I just couldn't believe it! Of all of the people this could happen to, the deadly, degrading event happened to my best-friend. I, too, began to cry as she struggled to describe the ways which her father had molested her and threatened to kill her if she were to ever tell anyone about what he had done to her.

After she had finished her confession, she looked at me as if she was waiting for a sign of forgiveness. Yet, I, too afraid to say the wrong thing, just sat there with tears of remorse streaming down my face. She waited a few seconds longer before finally deciding to get up and leave. I wanted to go after her, but what was I to say? What would be her reaction if I was to say the wrong thing? I was too afraid to find out, so I gathered my books and left for class.

Later on that day, we walked home after school instead of catching the school bus. She still looked a bit depressed, but seemed a lot better than she had



been before. She said that she was now feeling as if she had just gotten rid of an overweighed load that she had been longing to get rid of for years. She was, now, as free as an angel and felt as if she could take on the world. I asked her to spend the night at my house, but she refused my invitation. She said that she had one last thing that she had to do before she could completely feel at one with herself.

When I asked her what she was going to do, she just smiled at me and said not to worry about it and that she would see me the following morning. But I never did see her again. That night, she went home, had her last meal with her father, told him that she loved him and that she had forgiven him for what he had done to her. About an hour later, my best-friend had taken her own life, which resulted from an overdose of sleeping pills. A week later, she was buried in her homeland near a blooming rosebush, not too far away from her old neighborhood. Two days later, after I had returned to the states, I received a letter from her. It was postmarked the day of her death. In her letter, she admitted that she was going to kill herself and why, but not how she was going to do it. She also apologized for leaving so soon without saying good-bye and that later on in life I would realize the reason why she left.

Well, it's been ten years since her death, and I still haven't begun to understand why she ended her life so soon. Yet, somehow I feel deep down inside of my heart that I do understand why she ended her life. Although, I know that she's the only one that knows the true reasons why she killed herself, and she has taken those answers with her!



*"Self-Portrait" B&W Photograph by Mary Krich*



*Two Poems by Bruce Megee*.....

Minnesota Moon

Ripe with fullness,  
Spewing dim light over the rolling hills,  
The pseudo sun,  
Pretender of the night,  
Rolls across the star speckled sky,  
Waiting to be vanquished at dawn.

The fragrance of fresh cut hay  
fills the night.  
An occasional farm house light.  
Tress sleep,  
While still wind given them rest.  
Cows kneel in the fields.

On a lonely rural road  
headlights bounce between the gullies,  
Twin beacons leading us home.  
Our car in mothy pursuit.

The children  
asleep in the back.  
Her head  
asleep in my lap.  
Warm in our dark cocoon,  
Weary from the road.  
My solitude gives me pause.

The Day Laborer  
(1955)

On a vacant corner  
Black men wait,  
At day break.  
White men in trucks  
pick them up,  
And return again,  
At day's end.

Boss  
states his needs,  
Ignores their pleas.  
With authority's voice  
makes his choice,  
Points to men,  
They get in.

The young  
and strong,  
Don't wait long.  
The old and weak,  
Their chances bleak,  
Ply the liquor store,  
Next door.



# Well, Isn't That Convenient?

*Debby Woolfstead*

It's the '90's, what great conveniences we have to help us with our rushed and hectic lives . . . as long as nothing goes wrong with the new technology that has become integrated into our everyday lives. Modern technology often produces more inconvenience than convenience. Computers for work, college courses on cable TV and cellular phones are but a few modern conveniences that can turn into modern nightmares.

Computers; what a great invention, as long as they don't malfunction! As I sit at my computer for the seventh hour trying to get a rush transcript out, I try to keep my eyelids from closing. I reward myself by allowing a brief look to admire the night sky and shining stars. I come to a wonderful realization; I have almost completed my transcript. Break time being over, I look back to my computer screen and hear a gasp from my own mouth and feel the blood rush from my face as I now see unfamiliar characters staring back where there once were actual words. After using a quarter box of Kleenex to wipe away my tears and listing the pros and cons of throwing the computer out of the window into the beautiful night sky, which no longer looks so beautiful to me, I again psyche myself up to begin the process all over again.

What a wonderful idea, earn a degree while in the privacy of your own home. You can even tape it with your VCR to watch it later . . . as long as the cable doesn't go out or your VCR doesn't malfunction from electrical surges, or the kids decide to play Nintendo and change the settings. I'm sitting on my own couch ready to better myself through education. I push "Play" and meet my television instructor; she seems nice enough. Halfway into explaining today's

lesson, I realize I am not following her theory and I raise my hand, only to remember I wanted privacy so she cannot see me. As my instructor begins to explain further, she disappears and my picture now is one resembling snow on a black background. After fast forwarding and still seeing snow, I decide maybe I should take a ride over to the college in the morning and check out their class schedule.

The next best thing to being there, from anywhere, is when you have a cellular phone . . . just be sure your battery's charged up. Uh-oh, I just realized the tapes are due back at Block Buster. No problem, I'll just jump into the car and drop them off. No need to take my purse, shoes, or money. After all, I'm just going to put the tapes in the drop box; why would I need all those things? Well, the store's already closed but that's okay, I'll leave them now anyway. I get out of my car, return the tapes and get back in my car. I turn my key in the ignition. Where's the familiar sound of my car starting up? Okay, I don't panic; I'll just call someone for help. Oh, no, my trusty car battery will not allow my lighter to work, which means it will not allow my phone to work. Well, not to worry, I'll use the phone's battery. Now, where is that thing? Wait! I remember, I put it in the glove compartment a few days ago. Why do I still have silence on my phone? Whose car lights are those coming toward my car at this time of night? What a relief, I see the blue and red light bar across the roof of the car.

Modern technology can be a great help and convenience 99 times out of 100; it's just the one that's not included in that statistic that leaves me longing for the simpler days and simpler technology.

*Two Poems by Art Larriviere*.....

Resist in Peace

Purchase a gun  
Sell the powder  
Protect myself  
Snort to get louder

Sneer at the buyer  
Pull back my stash  
Flash him my weapon  
Remove all his cash

Wait for recruits  
Sweat through my clothes  
Run faster than Hell  
Again, use my nose  
Pay close attention  
Turn off my eyes  
Lean on some Ford  
Get shot by surprise

die.

Don't Send Them In

Fear of a painted smile  
stems from my youth.  
An evil laughter  
chills my bones.  
My fright from garish wear  
apparent to me.  
Outrageous appearance:  
Ghastly flows  
from atop a skull.  
Blood red nose  
on ivory mask.  
Purple does not infect  
an orange robe.  
To think of them  
curdles my flesh.

Dozens of them in a tent.  
Only there for amusement.

I keep in my repulsion  
can't give in.  
My parents think I'm sane.

But deep inside there's  
still that vision  
of Jojo at my feet.

It keeps me awake at night.



# A Violent Act

*Bruce Megee*

His final punch slammed her into the refrigerator, depositing her in a heap in the center of the kitchen floor. Slowly he walked around her motionless mass, expecting any moment for her to rise and continue the fight. His face was still taut with the rage that had propelled her to the floor. Cheeks red, eyes bulging, veins protruding from his neck, he leaned over her slightly.

"Get up bitch!" he barked.

Feeling the adrenaline pounding his heart, the rush of rage was still beyond his control. He needed to purge the anger. There was a sense of incompleteness, an unnatural pause. The matter hadn't been resolved.

Frequently they would cascade into a fury of verbal and physical battle. There was no stopping the torrent, once it was released. They would be consumed by the passion of the fight, unable to disengage until it had run its course.

"I don't hear your big mouth now . . . bitch," he chided, hoping to rally her to the fight, anxious to exorcise the rage that possessed him.

Normally the fights were loud arguments followed by beating each other until she reached her threshold of pain. Then she would retreat behind locked doors or flee to the safety of neighbors until he calmed down. Sometimes he would leave abruptly and quietly return hours later as if nothing had happened. She would say nothing for fear of igniting another episode.

He felt cheated by her silence. He needed her anger to counter his rage. "Come on damn it, let's finish it!" he demanded. He kicked a chair across the kitchen as if to make room in the ring for her return. But, there was nothing . . . not a sound. She laid motionless on the floor.

The rage came on the same as always. The arguing got louder. Accusations and threats were hurled like stones at each other with emphasis on the most painful recriminations. The pressure kept building and building like a case of the runs, to the point where the body ripped control from the mind, diminishing him to the role of a violent ride he could only watch unfold. His body pounding, hitting, being hit, cut, bruised, all to relieve the pressure and the unbearable pressure.

Feeling a wetness on his right hand, he looked down and saw blood running down his fingers, dripping to the floor. He stepped to the sink and ran water over a gash across his knuckles. Glancing back over his shoulder, now and again, not wanting her catch him off guard, he assessed the damage as not serious and wrapped his hand in a kitchen towel. 61  
As his rage began to recede, he felt the void begin to fill with an uneasiness. The quiet and the stillness began to bother him. He felt uncomfortable, conspicuous, even though no one else was around except her. Walking to the refrigerator he saw the bloody smear across the freezer door where her face hit just before she landed on the floor. He thought of how hard he had hit her. It was hard, bone jolting hard. He opened the refrigerator door and grabbed a beer. Twisting the cap off the beer bottle, he threw the cap into the trash and walked slowly around her to the kitchen table and sat down. He was tired. His emotions had worn him out. Lifting the bottle of beer high, tilting his head back, he drew a long gulp. Staring at the bottle he thought how the first beer of the day was the best.

He turned his attention to the rumpled pile of humanity in the center of the room. She laid on her left hip, twisted a

quarter turn to the left so that her left arm was behind her and her right arm was extended in front with her breasts on the floor. Her sandy blond hair, that usually fell several inches below her shoulders, was tossed around her neck and head so that no flesh was visible above her shoulders. Her pink house coat was raised to her waist exposing her bare ass and legs.

He pondered her immodest pose. She is a modest woman, he thought. If she were aware, she would be embarrassed by her exposure and would quickly cover herself. He felt a little voyeuristic gazing at the cleavage of her ass. The view rushed the image of her full nudity to his mind. He warmed as he recalled her sexual personality back when they first started dating. She was beautiful and she was built. She was playful and loved to tease and flirt. She was a passionate lover. That was many years ago, he recalled. In recent years sex was more like taking out the trash or any other chore. You go through the motions with the numbness of a repetitive function the body requires, like two people trapped in a dance, waiting for the music to stop.

On her hip was a dark purple bruise from a fight the previous week. He remembered she got the bruise when he shoved her against the bathroom door handle, but he couldn't remember what the fight was about. What the hell were we fighting about? he thought. It was only a week ago. He tried for a while to remember, but couldn't.

He noticed the cellulite dimples that covered her ass and hip. It made him think about his own physical problems. His back that goes out every so often and his beer belly keeps on getting bigger. Time's no friend of the flesh, he thought. It's a one way trip down hill.

They had known each other since they were kids, and been together since they were in high school. More than half their lives, he figured. What happened to the good times? he wondered. They were a long time ago. He tried to recall the last time they really enjoyed each other's company. Not in

the last few years, he figured, and they just seemed to be a blur. He couldn't think of a single occasion. Lifting the bottle, he downed another long swig of beer.

"Well if you want to lay there, go right ahead," he said, as if to excuse her from combat. He didn't feel the need to continue anymore. The pause and the beer had brought on a more reflective mood. There was no response. She remained as she had fallen.

Gazing at her sprawl, he thought about the two of them, and the spiral from young love into the hell they lived in, like two cats with their tails tied together. The frustration of the bond fueled their anger. They fought constantly. They couldn't shed their terrible dependence on each other. Neither one had the courage to leave, nor for that matter, had either seriously considered it. There was nowhere to go. They just spat the threat of leaving at each other, both afraid to look beyond the front door.

Finishing his beer, he tossed the bottle across the room, into the trash can next to the refrigerator. He rose from his chair and walked slowly to the refrigerator. His gait was heavy and tired. Opening the refrigerator, he pulled out another beer. Dropping the cap in the trash, he returned to his seat at the kitchen table.

His rage was gone. The uneasiness was turning to melancholy and a little bit of fear. He understood why he was feeling unhappy. His reflections on his marriage were less than uplifting and he didn't have any desire to think about his dead end, pointless job and the bullshit management. But the fear, he wondered, why was he feeling afraid?

Is it because she isn't moving?

Is she hurt seriously, or worse?

Will he go to jail?

Is it because he can't leave?

Is it because there's no reason, no point, no happiness, no fun, no future?

Is it because she will get up and life will be the same?



His head was swirling with questions. He felt his stomach tighten and the fear intensify. Unable to pinpoint what was causing his anxiety, he took a drink of his beer. He mentally recapped the list of possible causes of his despair over and over again, hoping to identify the culprit so he could understand it, take action and purge the fear. The carousel of questions presented each possibility for him to consider, one after another, until he realized that it wasn't any one particular issue, it was all of them. He was afraid of all of them and the weight of the sum was overwhelming. The fear and melancholy began to give way to despair. He tried to think of his options. There must be something I can do, or someplace I can go to feel all right again, he thought, but nothing came to mind.

Slowly he rose from his chair and traveled once again across the kitchen to the refrigerator. Opening the door he reached for another beer. Off came the bottle cap and into the trash. Taking a sip, he looked down at her with a blank stare. He was tired of looking at her. It seemed like he had been looking at her for days. Remembering how long they had been together, he thought of her as part of him, a physical part. He felt like they had evolved into Siamese twins, growing together over time and permanently attached, bound in the flesh. But her steely will and her caustic mouth made her a gangrenous, festering appendage that caused him tremendous pain.

Walking around her, he left the kitchen and walked down the hall and into the bedroom. He went to the dresser and opened the top drawer. Pausing, he looked at the pictures on top of the dresser. His parents, her parents, a picture of the two of them the first year they were married. They were old pictures. The colors had faded and the pictures had a reddish pink hue. He reached to the back of the drawer, behind the socks and under the T shirts, and pulled out a bundle wrapped in blue felt. Placing it on the dresser, he unwrapped his .357 magnum revolver. Spinning the cylinder,

he checked to see if it was loaded. It was, he knew it was, but he always checked to be sure. He held the gun, felt the grip, touched the trigger. From the weight of the gun, he could feel the power run up his arm and into his torso. He noticed how holding the loaded gun gave him a boldness, a courage he didn't usually have. He felt bigger, stronger and empowered.

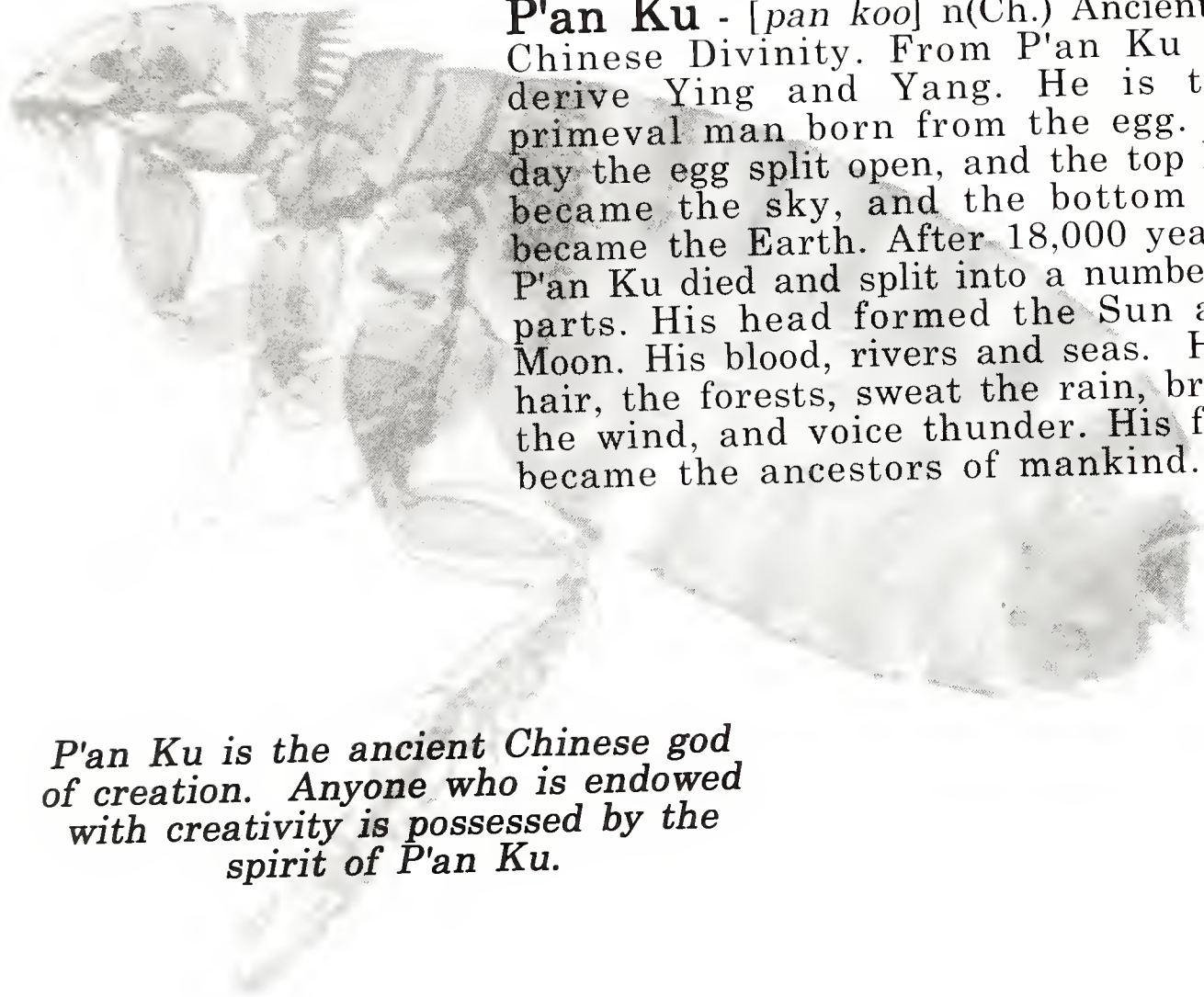
He walked back down the hall to the kitchen with his beer in one hand and the gun in the other. She was still there. Nothing had changed. Once again he took his seat at the kitchen table with his chair back against the wall. Taking a drink of his beer, he sat at the table aiming at different objects around the room. The wallpaper design of oranges, pears, watermelon and other assorted fruit offered plenty of targets for his fantasy target shoot. After pretending to shoot just about everything in the room, he laid the gun on the table. Drinking his beer, he gazed at her unchanged form on the floor for a long time with no particular thoughts or feelings. He was filled with more of a numbness than anything else.

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With the fluid motion of scooping up a spoonful of breakfast cereal, he lifted the gun, placed it under his chin, and without further thought or hesitation, pulled the trigger. BANG . . . the room shook. the kitchen window and door rattled. His arms fell to his side. His body went limp in the chair. The gun landed on the floor. Blood, bone and brain matter sprayed up the wall to the ceiling in a fan pattern from the top of his head, and began running back down the wallpaper, over the oranges, pears and watermelons towards the floor.

"Mmmmmmm . . ." faintly she murmured from the middle of the kitchen floor. Stirred from her deep sleep by the tremendous explosion and vibration, she made the first sound of her awakening, unaware of the metamorphosis her life had undergone. Slowly she slid her right hand under the clump of hair to console her bruised and bloody face.





**P'an Ku** - [pan koo] n(Ch.) Ancient Chinese Divinity. From P'an Ku we derive Ying and Yang. He is the primeval man born from the egg. One day the egg split open, and the top half became the sky, and the bottom half became the Earth. After 18,000 years, P'an Ku died and split into a number of parts. His head formed the Sun and Moon. His blood, rivers and seas. His hair, the forests, sweat the rain, breath the wind, and voice thunder. His fleas became the ancestors of mankind.

*P'an Ku is the ancient Chinese god of creation. Anyone who is endowed with creativity is possessed by the spirit of P'an Ku.*



# *Saint Betty*

We called you Saint Betty  
and certainly  
you're as close to a saint as we'll ever know  
(our wings do not brush too high from the ground)

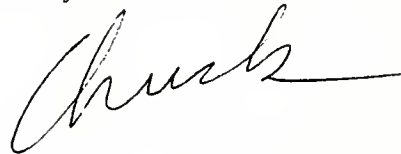
I have known you forever  
past Crews, my great god,  
past...everything  
and I have loved you forever  
and always will

These words are not to be taken lightly  
These words are as close as I can come to the truth

I love you dearly  
Repeat it!  
Repeat it like the ticking of the clock  
the clock of the heart

What we are is what we've been  
Bear that  
Carry it with you  
You are better than you know

You leave us  
(how could you have lasted so long?)  
You leave us  
but cannot  
Because you are buried into our souls

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Chuck', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

*Greg (Chuck) Eisman*  
*English Professor*



THIS SPECIAL ISSUE OF P'AN KU IS DEDICATED TO:



*Patron Saint of Literary Magazines*

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## Three Moves

*by Gerard Purciello*

Knight, Bishop, Queen

... checkmate.

A summer's soft whisper welcomes

the boy's journey

into endless possibilities.

Quiet resolutions, peaceful afternoons -

... the summer smell of no hurry.

Three months

Three moves

... a gentle transition.

# HAIKU

Majestic Clouds  
Above my empty ocean  
Seagulls cry your name

*by Coni Ciavarella*

Water flowing down  
trickles like a waterfall  
sprays tiny teardrops.

*by Lee Ann Rotzien*

Sun's bouncing rhythms  
Make sky, water, and the tides  
Show earth's intentions.

*by Maxine Spilton*

The old dog  
(As) dumb as he could be, forgot  
(Forgot) He was the Buddha

The old dog, coughing  
And sick, was once the  
Buddha. Woe is reincarnation

*by Alan Levy*

# The Hunt

by Bruce Megee

Minyuk left camp the morning of the previous day to hunt seals on the edge of the ice flows in the Chukchi Sea, north of the Bering straits. A flat plain of ice extends well off shore in the winter and when spring comes, the warming water melts the ice, breaking off large pieces, filling the sea with floating islands. A group of several families migrate here every year in the spring and follow the seals that gather in large colonies to breed.

Heading north, the long shadow of the hunter and his dog team lay before them. The team pulled the sled across the flat, frozen sea, their furry tails curled high over their backs, pulling in harmony. Minyuk's eyes scanned the blue horizon looking for seal colonies. He already had two seals from yesterday and one he killed earlier that day.

6 Far off in the distance, Minyuk could see the dark contrast of a seal colony on the ice at the edge of the sea. He slowed the team down and continued his approach. When he was within a few hundred yards, he stopped and secured his sled. The seals were still there, unconcerned by his distant presence. Minyuk gathered his ax, spear, and a coil of rope attached to a two foot steel stake. He started walking slowly towards the colony. By the time he was within a hundred yards, all of the seals were looking at him, moving their heads back and forth trying to decide if they were in danger. Finally, the first seals dove into the sea, starting a black wave of seals pouring off of the ice into the safety of the water. Quickly, Minyuk found a crevasse in the ice near the outer edge and began expanding the crack into a hole with his ax, until it was two or three feet in diameter. With his gloved hand, he swept the floating ice out of the hole. He had created an opening in the ice where the seals could come up for air. With the flat side of his ax, he hammered the steel stake into the ice and checked to make sure that the spear and rope were fastened securely to the stake.

Minyuk positioned himself on the opposite side of the hole,

away from the sun, so his shadow did not fall over the hole. Resting on one knee, he raised his spear, pointing it into the hole, waiting for a seal to rise for air. His spear tip was razor sharp with two large barbs to penetrate the seals flesh and hold the prey while he retrieved it. Poised and ready, Minyuk waited, staring into the hole. His thin slit eyes, squinted at the sun's reflection on the water, accentuating the crow's feet that punctuated his brown face. Occasionally there was a flash of movement under the ice. A seal darting by, but not stopping. Then a whiskery snout broke the surface for a brief second and disappeared. A quick gulp of air and it was gone. Patiently, Minyuk waited for the right opportunity. He knew the spear had to penetrate the body. A spear to the head would not hold a seal. He needed a shot at the body as a seal rolls after taking in air.

The ice occasionally creaked as the slow melting progressed. Minyuk was mindful that he must leave his hunting spot if a crack started to develop between him and his team. He could not risk being stranded on a floating island, drifting in the sea, waiting for his life to vanish with the ice.

Polar bears also followed the seals this time of year. Minyuk looked in all directions and glanced at his dogs to see if any bears were near by. They could quickly change from hunting seals to hunting him and his dogs. Unless Minyuk had a head start, the hunter could easily become prey.

Often, Minyuk would have to wait for his prey. During these times he would frequently think of his father, the man who taught him to hunt and fish. Over many years his father slowly lost his eyesight, until last summer his pupils were completely white and he could not see anymore. When they broke summer camp last year to move to winter camp, they had to leave him behind because he could no longer take care of himself or travel the difficult trail. The last conversation they had, his father was sitting on his bearskin blanket with his legs crossed, his back perfectly straight, staring into the distance at nothing. All was packed and ready to go. They talked for a while of the old days. The last thing he said to Minyuk before he left was, 'Dying is easy. Living is hard.' Minyuk thought of his words often on his lonely hunts.



A swirl and a splash snapped Minyuk's attention back to the watery hole. He poised himself, spear high, intent, waiting... then a gulp, slosh..., and the quick thrust of the spear into the side of a rolling seal. The rope raced into the water behind the fleeing seal. The coils of rope briskly flew off the ice until a dull thud and the rope snapped tight between the seal and the stake. Minyuk grabbed the rope and started pulling the seal to the surface. At first there was resistance, but gradually the seal weakened from the damage done by the spear and depletion of air, until there was nothing but dead weight on the rope. When he got the seal to the surface, Minyuk grabbed its tail with one hand and the spear with the other. He slid the seal from the water onto the ice. Tying the rope around his quarry's tail, he dragged the carcass back to his sled and stowed it with the others.

His sled full, Minyuk estimated he was about five hours from camp. He rallied the dogs and pointed them south, across the glistening ice plain towards camp. With a steady trot, the team pulled their master and his bounty home.

When Minyuk arrived in camp, his family rushed to greet him. His hunt had lasted two days. His oldest son, Aquwat, who would be old enough for his first hunt next season, took the four seals from the sled, cut off the heads and tails and gutted them. He then unharnessed the weary dog team and let them feast on the entrails.

Weebwa, his wife, examined the four carcasses.

"It was a good hunt," Weebwa said.

Minyuk nodded, not saying anything as he unloaded his sled.

"Sukyan returned today from his hunt with nothing. He lost two dogs to a polar bear before he could chase him off," Weebwa said as she lifted the paw of one of the team dogs to see why it was limping. "His wife gave birth to a new baby while he was hunting. Both are sick because they are hungry. He has no food for his fire," She paused, anticipating Minyuk's reaction to what she was about to say. "We have plenty. Will you give Sukyan one of our seals?" She asked.

"You know I cannot," Minyuk said as he removed the harness from the sled. "I will not shame Sukyan by giving him food he did

not hunt. That would bring dishonor to his fire."

Weebwa stared intensely at her husband's face with her coal dark eyes. Determined to make him understand, she asked, "Would you honor Sukyan by letting his wife and child die? Would you let the people around your fire die if you had several bad hunts?"

"It is the way of our ancestors," Minyuk explained. "It is not my doing."

Weebwa turned and walked away from Minyuk leaving the pain of her displeasure with him.

Minyuk chained the dogs to their stakes and fed them their daily meal of ground fish heads and scraps. Then, he sat down on his sled, watching the dogs eat. Weebwa's heart was good for what she was asking. He did not want to see Sukyan's wife and baby die either, but there are ways that have been observed for all time that say a hunter must kill the food he brings to his family. A hunter who cannot do this will feel shame from all the other hunters. Minyuk knew Sukyan was a good hunter. He was strong and brave. If he were not, he would have lost all of his dogs to the polar bear and maybe his life too.

Minyuk understood Weebwa's concern that Sukyan's family would starve if he had several bad hunts, but he felt helpless to go against the old ways. To do nothing would be easy, but that would mean death for Sukyan's wife and child. His father's last words rang in his head. Life truly was harder than death.

The dogs had finished eating by now and were curled up in furry balls, asleep in the snow. Seeing Sukyan in the distance, Minyuk picked up one of the seals and headed in his direction.

"Sukyan," Minyuk called as he approached. "I have a problem that perhaps you can help me with."

"What is it?" Sukyan asked.

"On my hunt, I killed four seals. I only need three. I was wondering if you would take one for me and return it to me on a day when you have a good hunt and I do not." Minyuk explained.

Sukyan thought for a moment and said "Minyuk, you are a good friend. For you, I will do this."

## Idiot

*by Colleen Hurley*

One sound grunts from her toddler tongue,  
swells like an awkward penis held, squeezed

by lithium shakes. Her hole, her pickled  
lips stuck in a howler's position.

Four legged. Bitch. Dog. Non-human.  
The idiot tries to regurgitate chunks

of verbiage, shrapnel fragments baptize.  
Tongue drags her like a slave across hot,

carnal skillets, then along the molding  
of the walls. Grey lint, hair snapped

from other's follicles and calico dust,  
the color of Margaret Ray's bones, taste

inside her nostrils. Words gestate, call,  
leap forward, back. Arms, legs dislocate.

Faces stampede, pile on top, tongue  
goes limp, spreads over cavities, fills

in like molten lava. The alphabet hangs  
from her vocal chords, fixed in amber,

fossilized. She is under ice, thicker  
than the bed you share, buried, edible,

quiet, aluminum, stillborn. A moan heard  
from the death of the dead, her plastic doll

eyes stare because they have to, at them  
and you matted in a copper frame against

the bluest sky. She feels your blades  
vibrate, hollowed, glide, cut over her,

shave figure eights. A sound grunts below,  
guttural. They stop, you follow to look

down on the idiot. Fingers point, sharp  
as steeples. Poke at her loose, rippled  
bacon skin. Speak they say.

## SNARE

*by Heather Gibbons*

inside a snare  
**beaten**  
unwilling of all  
**myself**

ready to crack  
**tense**  
ashamed to be  
**with**

your basic jar  
**fear**  
i maintain it  
**faithfully**



## Dryad

*by Crystal Lamb*

skeletal fingers  
push through  
earth and snow  
reaching for  
the sky  
and life

hidden spirit  
exists within  
determined  
to be adorned  
in green  
and gold

## Mainstream

*by Lawrence Carrino*

honeysuckle fumbling pool-green tarp  
greener grass  
outstretched like satin

mammoth-eyed shotgun kiss sun on my back  
shadow on your face

candy-coated illusion lost in my blue-collar dream

## Lactrodectus Mactans

*by Cheryl Bringas*

The widow's web  
is littered with corpses-  
    lifeless vessels,  
use sucked out  
of each one.

mate, destroy...  
mate, destroy...

Is this  
her sole intent?

love, kill...  
love, kill...

too inane a concept  
for our minds  
    to believe.

Does her rank function  
as a mere component  
of the food chain,  
    or does

an illustrious purpose  
    frustrate  
our intellect?

What hue  
is the widow's  
vital juice:  
    red?  
    black?

A kaleidoscope  
of colors  
    pilfered  
from web candy.  
She becomes  
    who they were.

Her abdomen,  
    her warning,  
Red - danger.  
Black- evil.  
    She exists  
to feed her womb.

## O° grado

*by Abigail Raymond*

Porque entre lo que tú dices  
y lo que yo entiendo  
hay tanto

e s p a c i o  
(tengo miedo).

Porque tus palabras se vuelven manos  
que  
me abren  
que  
me tocan

No sé lo que siento.  
No soy capaz de pensar.

Porque olvido ser

## Mujer Independiente Capaz!

Y me vuelvo

niña asustadiza

(temo que no estarás para levantarme si caigo).

Porque no derecho a pedirte que lo hagas...

Porque  
Sé que puedo levantarme sola,  
Sé que nadie es dueño de nadie...  
Y soy responsable de mi.

Porque sé tantas cosas  
pero a veces no las siento  
( y muchas veces no las quiero)  
Te pido tu presencia,  
porque en ella estás tú  
porque en ella están tus ojos  
y entre las dos hay un lugar  
donde hay un reflejo  
que puede darme fuerza para amarte sin miedo...

para ser tu compañera.



## Five O

*by Gianna Lamorte*

A  
straight man  
is going to tell me about  
lesbians?  
hmmm...  
"It's sexual  
It's sexy,  
love to watch...  
but you can't conceive"  
(as if procreation has always been his sexual  
objective)  
In and out, no doubt  
no gratification---just fertilization.  
Hypocrisy at its finest!

No mention of love,  
just your version  
of what a real woman is.  
You are so far off,  
I don't know whether to  
laugh or scream.

Laugh, because ridiculous people are  
funny---  
and you?

Well, you are a  
fucking riot.

# Oedipus Jeff

*by Dee Cone*

"Get out of here you drunken whore, and don't ever come back here again!"

Jennie picked herself up from the sidewalk and staggered toward the building for support. She tried unsuccessfully to straighten her skirt and smooth her hair, matted from spray abuse. Oblivious to the disapproving stares of the uncaring pedestrians who walked quickly around her, she staggered down the street. The cold night air helped her to regain her composure somewhat and lift her spirits. 'Well,' she thought, 'it isn't that late. One good john and I could make it to Flannagan's before they close.'

She tried to block out her ever-present thoughts of Jeff. Walter had gained custody of their fifteen year old son which in itself was difficult enough, but the most traumatizing blow was that awful day when Jeff told his mother he never wanted to see her again. 'I wonder if he's in college now,' she mused. The thought of going to Flannagan's, however, quickened her step and helped to provide the antidote for her despair. "Hi honey! Want a ride?" the driver of the sleek, black Jaguar slowed to a stop.

"Sure good lookin', your place or mine?"

She bounced into the car looking toward her new conquest. As their eyes met she gasped, opened the door, stumbled off the seat and fell onto the sidewalk.

The engine raced loudly as Jeff gunned the motor and sped away.

## Soapbox

*by Lawrence Carrino*

My body churns beside me  
I have escaped the tomb  
of indifference, misuse

My throbbing heart and pounding head  
float beside me, a reminder  
mirror mirror on the wall  
mirror mirror the horror of me

You sit there with me  
in my vacant space  
I am gone  
wasted time, filled the desk  
Chew on the bit  
I seek no prize for my words  
yet receive a stare for the years behind

Like Dumbo, the elephant escapes the zoo  
wallows like a pig in the nightingale air and celebrity strife

focus the glass eye of God on me  
and see

blood flows through the basilisk  
lamplight glow  
coffee beans and paper trees  
review me for I have sinned

feasted on what will never fill me



# Ima\*ging

by Lee Ann Rotzien

*Ima\*ging*, the almighty goddess, created the vast and wondrous universe. After creating the ceilingless heavens, she created four sweet angels to add beauty to this new world.

The first angel *Ima\*ging* created was Crystal-Ann. Crystal-Ann was almost clear and colorless. She had curly, golden-yellow hair, the color of honey. She was very graceful and loved to giggle.

16 The second angel was Belle. Belle was beautiful and made a little jingle sound every time she moved about. Her hair was bright red and flowing, like the blaze of a camp fire.

The third angel's name was Skip. He was peace loving and leader of the angels. He was good-natured and often wore a big smile. Skip's hair was woven and brown, the color of chocolate pudding.

The fourth angel was Tiny. His hair was black, the color of night. Tiny liked to whistle, which worked in his favor. He was much smaller than the other angels and could easily be left behind. Sometimes, Crystal-Ann, Belle and Skip would fly right past him. They never did this on purpose, but when it did happen, Tiny would whistle, and they always waited for Tiny to catch up to them.

Then, *Ima\*ging* gave each angel an infinite supply of color dust to sprinkle around the heavens. Sometimes they sprinkled the dust here and there just to look at the

different colors. Usually, the angels used their dust when they danced and sang melodies of joy. But like all children, the angels eventually became bored, so *Ima\*ging* created Moon for the angels' pleasure.

Moon would brightly light up the heavens with its white shimmer in a way that no amount of color dust could, even with the infinite supply. Before Moon came along, the angels, being nocturnal creatures, had played in darkness without even noticing this fact. Now when Moon was out, the angels got to rest their strained eyes. The angels were very pleased that Moon was created and were most grateful to *Ima\*ging* for bringing Moon into their world.

Moon played hide and seek with the angels. Everyday, Moon would change shape just enough to fool the angels. Sometimes, Moon would be full and bright. Then, Moon would appear as a half circle. A little later, looking like a crescent, Moon could hardly be spotted by the angels. To help them find Moon, the angels used their color dust to create sparkles in the darkness. These became stars which made it easier to spot Moon's hiding place. Sometimes, to the angels' surprise, Moon would pop out again, full and bright. The angels thought Moon's cycles were fun. Everyone was happy...for awhile...until the angels, like all children, once again, got bored. *Ima\*ging*, like all parents, wanted to keep her children entertained and out of

trouble, so she created Sun.

Sun was marvelously bigger and brighter than Moon. When Sun was out, the angels felt warm and were delighted with their new friend. With smiling faces, they danced and sang songs of joy. But Moon was terribly jealous of Sun's magnificence, not to mention all the attention the angels now gave Sun as their new playmate.

Up to now, Moon had no rival. As the angels paid more attention to Sun, Moon hid more and more, and the angels found it harder to seek out Moon. The angels were saddened by Moon's behavior, not realizing that Moon's feelings were hurt. They called upon *Ima\*ging* for help. *Ima\*ging*, in her endless wisdom, knew it was time for the angels to do for themselves. She instructed them to rely on their gifts. Well, the angels tried to entice Moon out of hiding. Belle jingled, and Crystal-Ann, Skip, and Tiny sang, danced and pranced, again and again, but nothing worked.

Everyday, the angels sat and thought of ways that might bring Moon out. One day, the angels were a little restless. They were just playing around when Tiny's infinite supply of color dust spilled. Concerned about the consequences, all of the angels scrambled around trying to recover the dust. Crystal-Ann and Belle began to cry and their tears rained down onto the colors. Violet, red, orange, yellow, blue, so much color had fallen, splashing everywhere. The angels were so worried, they hadn't noticed the rainbows they created, or how the sky turned blue. They kept right on cleaning and cleaning; Crystal-Ann swept and Belle mopped, while Tiny and Skip each held a bucket, but the colors seemed to mix and grow, spilling over onto Sun.

Apparently, Sun's radiance magnetized the colors. Sun was big, but couldn't take the weight of the colors. Slowly, Sun was pushed down, retreating into the horizon. The angels were so preoccupied with worry, they still hadn't notice the effect of the marvelous colors that were created when Sun set down.

But Moon, still hidden away, had observed this fiasco. Moon felt sorry for the angels. Moon came out once Sun was down. When the angels saw this, they were overjoyed. They soon forgot the spilled color dust and started playing with Moon.

When *Ima\*ging* got wind of this, she called upon the angels. *Ima\*ging* ordered Skip to form permanent clean up committees. Even though she knew it was to be an endless and eternal task, she told the angels that everyday they were to take turns cleaning up their mess, so Sun could come out.

In order for Sun to be free from the weight of the colors, the angels continued to work hard. When Moon rested, Sun came out. When Sun rested, Moon came out. Moon and the angels went back to their game of playing hide and seek, once more creating, and this time keeping, Moon's cycles. Moon was no longer jealous of Sun. Now everyone was happy.

Everyday, over and over again, the angels are still up there cleaning, so that each day Sun may come out to visit. Then, at night they play with Moon. With so much to do, they never get bored. The angels are pleased to have both of their friends back. They prance and dance around the heavens. *Ima\*ging* smiles proudly as she looks upon them.

## Heart Shaped Box

*by Rhonda Leasure*

A big lump of melting chocolate  
Sits motionless upon my tongue  
Staring visions into the blank wall  
Where my picture of you once hung  
Fondling the crumpling cellophane  
Hearing you laughing together  
Through the sound of the gentle rain  
Where my tears hid in the weather  
I almost gave this heart to you  
But here all alone in my room  
The empty red box is the tomb  
Of the sweet love you never knew



## Enthralled

*by Heather Eberhardt*

He takes me gently into his arms.  
Kisses me softly, roughly, then sweetly.  
Plunging his tongue in my mouth  
Searching, tasting--  
Moving his lips to my flesh  
Biting, taunting.  
His eyes staring into mine, pleading.  
His hands dancing, roaming, kneading my body.  
His tongue, slowly licking the invisible trails  
His hands left behind.  
He places his body on top of mine slowly,  
His hands between my thighs, caressing.  
His body, covered with sweat dripping down his chest.  
His heart racing, pounding against my hand.  
He enters me smoothly, quickly, yet patiently.  
He fills me with ecstasy--takes me to places I've never been before.  
He moans, comes, rolls over and falls asleep.  
He snores.

# The Essence of My Life

*by George Aguilar*

I was seventeen years old the first time I ever held a gun. I have never been the same since. It all seems so long ago, but those ghosts haunt me still to this day.

It was July first when I got the news. My mother sat down with tears in her eyes and broke down.

"You know your father has been sick for some time now; I think you are old enough to understand," she paused to wipe the tears away "It's cancer, he's dying."

It was all too much for me to handle. I felt a tidal wave of emotions. At first I was hurt, then, mad at her for not telling me sooner. I felt she had denied me the chance to make amends with my father.

20 I screamed at her, "Why goddammit? Why didn't you tell me? Why?" She cried harder. I seemed to be making a delicate situation worse.

"I couldn't do that to you. You were so young when I found out. I wanted to protect you. I wanted you to have your childhood."

The cancer was in its last stages and little could be done. It was Monday. He passed away on Wednesday.

Our financial situation at the time was in such dire straits that we could not even afford to give my father a traditional funeral. The cost of the casket, as well as other necessities, was beyond our means. My mother and I decided that our only option was cremation and to place his ashes in the cemetery.

My world, and everything in it, was starting to fall apart. It was as close to hell as I'd ever want to get. Now, it was my mother and I alone against the world. I was left

with the title of 'man of the house.' Along with that title came responsibilities, big ones.

My mother was in her sixties. She worked long hours cleaning houses to send me to the best catholic schools she could afford. She often said to me, "I can't leave you much in this world, but what I can leave you with is an education."

It would be a long time before I would realize what she meant by that.

I had to take a job working as a janitor at my school in return for a lower tuition. I was a student in good standing and this was the school's way of helping me with my situation. I worked my ass off; sometimes until 9 or 10 at night. I did it all. I swept the halls, cleaned the bathrooms and emptied the trash. Name any major custodial task and my ass was there. I would often see the other kids playing sports after school or driving home in their parent's luxury car of the month. I did not understand how I fit in to all of that. I was bitter and mad at the world. I held all those rich kids in contempt. Meanwhile, things at home didn't get any better. Utilities were being turned off left and right; first the cable, then the phone. We even went without electricity for one night.

It was around that time I decided I had to do something, anything, to help out. I remember the day as if it were yesterday. I picked up the phone and called my best friend, Ivan, who attended another school across town. He was making big money running cocaine in rented cars, from Miami to Key West every weekend, for two thousand

a ride. He worked for two Colombian brothers who operated out of Key Biscayne. I had never been involved in anything of that nature before. Aside from stealing books from the library and the occasional candy bar here and there, my crime portfolio was slim. It was out of character for me, but I was desperate. After talking things over with Ivan, he agreed to let me in on the score. He said he would talk to the brothers and arrange for them to meet me.

The meeting was the following night and I was nervous as hell. I had a lump in my throat the entire ride to their house, unaware of how deeply involved I would soon be in their game. When we arrived at the house, Fred and Nestor greeted us at the door. Nestor said to me,

"Come in little brother, we have much to discuss. Ivan has already told us all about you. Ivan has so much faith in you, that he has agreed to put his ass on the line if you happen to fuck up. We understand your situation and we can help, if you return the favor."

I lit a Marlboro and nodded my head. Fred joined the conversation and added,

"Ivan tells us you are smart and know your way around. Working for us you will prosper; after all, this is the land of opportunity. You can make all your dreams come true, if you are loyal to us."

I remember thinking that Nestor and his brother should be selling Amway or something. They had that endearing game show host quality. The whole thing seemed so legal it was frightening. Soon, Ivan and I were making the rounds every weekend. Every Friday after school I was in rented Cadillacs and vans. The Colombians hid the kilos in the firewalls and tires of the cars. All we had to do was drive to the destination and jump in another car that was waiting to take us back. That was it, three hours tops. I knew it was a risk, but for two thousand

dollars a week, tax free, you do the math.

The money started pouring in like rain from heaven. I had to start thinking of new places to stash the money around the house. I resorted to shoe boxes in the attic. I would take out a little here and there to pay bills or buy groceries. I explained to my mother that I had taken a job parking cars at a country club on weekends, to fend off any suspicions she might have. She bought it.

As time went on, business improved. I was a fast learner and mastered my new craft. Soon, I was doing freelance runs for friends of the brothers. Word got around that I was loyal and always punctual. Time was of the essence in my line of work. I started to branch out and look for ways to invest my money. I decided I would pool my money with Ivan and purchase half a kilo of cocaine and parlay that into bigger and better things. Somehow homework lost its fervor. I barely went to school and my grades were dropping fast.

I always had large sums of money on me. This was highly dangerous given the element of people I catered to. Reluctantly, I bought insurance in the form of a gun. Bad move, very bad move!

I hated guns and hated violence even more, but with owning the gun, I felt a strange power; the power to alter fate, to give and take life. I took more risks. It warped my mind to the extent that I actually started to think of myself as a 'bad ass.' I was in way over my head. I was a child playing a dirty game. It was slowly pulling me in with its many seductions. I think it's fair to say that I never wanted to be involved in a life of crime. I loved school. I wanted to do well and be the first in the family to go to college. Hopelessness and desperation led me in that direction, along with a lack of understanding and education. Life would soon be throwing me one of those



curve balls that change your perspective forever.

It was Friday night and I had a big deal that was to go down with a new client; ten thousand dollars of pure Bolivian powder. The drop off was at midnight in a small strip mall in the Redlands.

The client's name was Alex. He owned a power boat business on one of the Keys. In my opinion, he seemed like a guy with enough extra cash around to spend on my product. I had only dealt with Alex one time before and things had gone well. When Alex asked for a bigger delivery the next time, I didn't find it suspicious. I didn't realize it then, but I was in for the surprise of my life.

On the night of the deal, I summoned Ivan to drive with me and handle the security for my peace of mind. Although I had made plenty of deals before, the fear and trepidation of my actions were always present. Ivan and I didn't even have a chance to get out of the car.

22 Bright flashing lights were everywhere. Men with guns surrounded the car and ordered us onto the ground. We were busted! Our friend Alex turned out to be an undercover DEA agent. It seemed that a small time dealer had given us up to avoid jail time. Our whole operation was under surveillance and we went down for trafficking of narcotics, with intent to sell and possession of a concealed weapon. Ivan got the worst of it. He was over eighteen and unbeknownst to me, the gun he carried had bodies on it. He later went down for murder and other drug charges.

I spent one and a half years in a juvenile facility. Neither God nor lawyers could have gotten me out of it. I had to serve the time.

My mother cried from disbelief. She blamed herself. This only made me feel worse. The whole ordeal was, for lack of better words, pure hell. My mother came to visit

often. On one particular visit she brought a letter addressed from my school. It turned out to be my SAT scores. I had tested in the top tenth percentile. I read in astonishment, 1650. A few months earlier I could have gone to the college of my choice. I was denied. I blew my chances at a better life. I closed my doors and played my future for easy money. You see, I never gave education much thought as being a way out of my environment. I never looked at the bigger picture. I failed to see the result of my actions. Money will come and money will go, but an education will stay with you forever. No matter how poor or how many doors have been shut in your face, having an education can heal wounds and open doors. Yeats once wrote, "You finally begin to live when you realize life is tragic." My life began seven years ago and I'm never looking back.

The other day I ran into some guys I knew from the old days, along with some new faces as well. They were like I once was, alone with diminished dreams and trying to find the easy way out of the poverty. What could I say to them? Should I have told them that college credits are more important than money in the shoe box? The truth is, I understand. I have been down that road many times before. Unfortunately, it sometimes takes a tragedy to turn a life around. The reality of my life is that most of the kids I grew up with are either dead, on drugs, or in jail. I did what I thought I had to do and lost a significant part of my innocence along the way. I have been on both sides of the grass and have come to the realization that it is as green as you make it. I am not proud of what I did. If anything, it has made me realize my mistakes and helps me to keep going forward.

I said good-bye to the guys and wished them well. Life's lessons would find them soon enough. I turned and walked away. It's been seven long years since I held a gun.

## Some Days I Love Goldfish

*by Becci Goodall*

Some days my goldfish bump-bump away stress-nosing glass walls  
Mouths gaping open-close in silent Gregorian chants  
Water filter bubbling white noise-popping crystal bubbles  
Like icy winter melt buzzing over white waterfalls  
Fins brushing a plastic castle hedged by neon seaweed gardens  
Ten gallon fantasy island-kitten stares for hours-sleepy musings

But some days I hate those needy Cheerio mouths-begging  
Slimy cloudy tank cluttering my space-crowding  
Plant debris choking B57 polluting noise box  
Water splashing cloud stencils on my end table  
Stinking tuna fish flakes matting carpet threads  
Baby rattle floating-sloshing sewage

Because some days I am neurotically neat  
A combed parted suited accountant  
Methodically slotting items in columned ledgers  
Crisp Oxford's buttoned and racked on polished brass  
Razor creased jeans centered by steam ironed T-shirts  
Riding boots lined military straight by Reeboks and Birkenstocks

But most days I'm a packrat magazine saving spirals  
Mildewed shower tiles languish with dried on toothpaste

Macaroni petrified into fossilized elbows and spirals  
Paper mountains mound up to collapse onto  
Dirt seeded carpet lining toy littered hallways  
(There's a swing at the park and I promised baby)

Most days I cherish my gray Volvo life  
Chauffeur to soccer matches, school plays, and gymnastics  
Room mother to Miss Brown's first grade Animaniacs  
Undergraduate in studies of Seuss, Kermit, and Sesame Street  
Zoo keeper of hermit crabs, hamsters, fish, and Claus the cat  
Wiper of scrape knee tears, Disney enthusiast, master pretender

But some days I crave liqueur in my coffee-bourbon for breakfast  
Chain smoking Camels-butt to tip-jolting in roofless jeep  
Screaming fucking obscenities into interstate nothingness  
Hedonist with no identity-discussing Chekov and Bronte in smoky  
dives  
Puking sushi and tequila mushed with pizza on original Izaak  
Mizrahi  
Awake in a stark oceanside loft-mattress slapped on wooden floor  
Wrapped in black silk sheets-strange and new as undiscovered  
Picasso

## Glutton

by Colleen Hurley

Take me.  
Swallow this dull thorn, do not  
cough, teach  
me to breathe.  
Be deliberate, peel  
me off my shelf,  
be a prudent razor.  
Loved.  
I'd like to be spineless, a fish that  
gasps,  
bathes in your head.

Pinch me.  
If you like, cut twice  
on the small  
of my back so I cannot get away.  
Blow, turn  
me into a scab. Pick  
at me, show hunger's  
grin. Skeletal.  
I'll remain dry,  
a corridor, eyes hollow.

Hear me.  
Not with heart, the brain holds  
all intention, incubates, breeds  
the wanting.  
Unlatch my stem, carelessly.  
Bronze me, make me immoral as  
dirt. Sift  
me through you, ask  
no one's permission.



*Untitled*  
Carolina Efron  
B&W Photo





*Child portrait*  
Alexis Walters  
Pencil Drawing





*Blue Fish*  
Tati Burszstein  
Hand Built Coil Ceramic Pot



*The Pod*  
Kimberly Elliott  
Free Form Hand Built Ceramic Vase





*Pondering the Apple*  
Sherry Williamson  
Linocut Print



*Untitled*  
Laura O'Toole  
Oil Painting



*Raku Clay Vases*  
Constantine Wolski



*Dude*  
Krista Kelley  
Ceramic Clay Bisque





*Reclining Nude*  
Christine Gallagher  
Charcoal Drawing



*Ghost*  
Victoria Wegner  
B&W Photo





*Asparagus*  
Alice Diamant  
Acrylic Painting





*Boots*  
Alexis Walters  
Charcoal Drawing

# BETTY OWEN: BROWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S GEM

*After a career of thirty years, Betty Owen, Broward Community College's English Department Head on South Campus, will retire. Through the years she has made numerous contributions to the staff, students, and growth of BCC.*

*She has contributed to many intercollegiate academics and activities. As adviser to P'an Ku and Silver Sands, she helped establish the state and national criteria of excellence. Betty developed the first Magazine Journalism courses offered in community colleges, has spoken at several state and national college publications' conventions, presented seminars on magazine layout and design and was also a founder of the South Florida Poetry Institute.*

*Betty has served in several professional organizations, including Associated Collegiate Press, Columbia Scholastic Press, Florida Community College Press Association, Community College Journalism Association, Association for Education in Journalism and Women in Communications, Inc..*

*Among her many achievements are MA in English from the University of Miami, 1965; NCCPA Distinguished Adviser Award, 1980; WICI Finalist for Outstanding Woman of the Year, 1983; FCCPA Advisers Hall of Fame, 1989; BCC/UFF Administrator of the Year, 1993; FCCAA Hall of Fame, 1994.*

*Betty is truly one of BCC's greatest ladies. She is one of the most poised women I have ever known. I have the privilege to have her as a teacher, a mentor and a friend. Betty's constant harmonious presence and positive outlook on life benefit all those who come in contact with her. Her generosity, kindness and warmth have earned her the title of St. Betty. She is loved by many people throughout the college, staff and students. Betty Owen will be missed greatly and remembered always.*

**Lee Ann Rotzien**  
*Assistant Editor*

**Rena Register, editor of P'an Ku, interviewed Betty Owen recently.**

**Rena Register:** When and how did you first become involved with P'an Ku?

**Betty Owen:** When I first started teaching in 1965, P'an Ku was already established as a magazine. I had my students submit material for it and much of it was chosen. Toward the end of the year, the adviser said she was leaving BCC for another college, so the adviser position was open. When Dr. Ledbetter, the department head, asked me if I would take it, I said yes. At the time, I had no idea what I was getting into.

**RR:** What was BCC and P'an Ku like in those days?

**BO:** The student body was very active, and becoming more active, politically, literarily and in almost every other way. Students not only came to class, they planned on being involved in activities during the afternoon and at night. To build interest in the magazine, we decided to have a P'an Ku club, and the first meeting attracted over fifty students who stayed with the magazine -- usually



until they graduated. P'an Ku had been supported by the English Department and was sold to be used in



classes. The students had bigger things in mind and were willing to work to implement them. We sold subscriptions to the magazine to get money for printing and changed P'an Ku from a twenty-four page, black and white publication to a sixty-four page, full color magazine. The first issue was a big success and the students never ran out of great ideas. The following year, what had been a yearbook, became a magazine format (Silver Sands), so we were publishing two literary magazines and three issues of a yearbook/general interest magazine each year. We were always facing deadlines. Thanksgiving and Easter, especially, became our get-to-the-printer work days, not holidays.

**RR:** Did you imagine that you would be still teaching at BCC thirty years later?

**BO:** I have never been one to think that I have to have really long term goals. They work well for others, but I

always felt that what I was supposed to do would unfold for me. Since there was a lot of Zen interest in the sixties, maybe that helped reinforce my feeling. I loved my first year of teaching and being involved with a college. Florida was just getting the 2 plus 2 system in place and we all felt that we were part of a very important educational movement. I really appreciated that the junior college (as it was called at that time) made an education available to almost everyone. Even before I started working with the magazine, I was involved with helping students, and then working with them on a goal which I believed in -- the value of writing -- made the job seem ideal. I remember often leaving the campus thinking, they are paying me for this?

**RR:** When did you begin teaching and what sparked your interest in creative writing?

**BO:** I began teaching creative

writing as a course the same semester I began advising the magazine. We had close to thirty students in the class and it really kept me busy, but I loved every minute of it. There is something magical about seeing a rough draft become a powerful piece of writing, or an insight become a poem. Sometimes a poem could be put on hold for weeks while the poet searched for just the right word. I started writing poetry when I was in elementary school. I remember my first poem was a rhymed, four lines per stanza poem on Christopher Columbus and the teacher said I could not have written it. After I wrote a few more, she became a believer. Like most writers, I had an early love affair with words. In the first grade, I was fascinated with homonyms and thought spelling was the greatest fun in the world. But, back to my own writing. I edited the high school newspaper and yearbook. I took ten years out for marriage and children, so when I returned

to college, I was pretty pragmatic. But I studied poetry with some great teachers and wrote a few short stories and some poetry then. I found that when I started teaching creative writing, my broad background in literature was a great help. Also, creative writing programs are relatively recent additions to college graduate curriculum, so you did not have creative writing majors then.

**RR:** How do today's creative writing students compare with those students you had when you first started teaching?

**BO:** There is probably not a lot of difference as far as the writing goes. I required a portfolio then and I do now, which means that where you get to at the end is more important than any one piece. Creative writing has to allow students room to experiment and fail, just so they pick up the pieces and start again. One big difference is that universities



like FIU now require three composition courses and CRW counts for one of them.

**RR:** Did you consciously choose teaching over writing?

**BO:** I definitely made a choice and I have never been sorry. Harry Crews was at BCC when I first started, he is a good example of someone who made the choice of putting writing first or at least equal. When I started, you did not have to be a writer to teach writing, but today, with all the MFA programs in CRW, it is becoming an expectation that the person do both; but we are talking about university programs where the person is expected to only teach one or two classes per term, or even year. To sustain writing seriously -- four to six hours a day -- is almost impossible for someone teaching at a community college. Another aspect is that helping others with their writing is also creative, so the urge to create can be fulfilled in many ways.

**RR:** If you had to do it all over again, is this the way you would have done it?

**BO:** Yes, I would. I've had a great time and I hope I have made a small contribution in making the world a better place.

**RR:** What will be your strongest memories of your 30 years at BCC?

**BO:** Undoubtedly the magazine staffs over the years. We worked so closely together, that I feel like if I met any one of them tomorrow, we could start talking where we left off. The students really taught me a lot, made my life richer, and together we accomplished some great issues. We worked really hard, but we also played hard -- going to New York, Chicago, St. Louis for national conventions, around the state for state conventions, having coffee houses and building Earth Day domes, or just reading poetry on my patio -- there were many wonderful times.

The second strongest memory will be of the emerging South Campus. When you start with rooms behind a fruit stand, come to a modular village, and finally become a traditional campus, there are lots of potent memories of faculty, staff, and students.

**RR:** How hard is it going to be to say good-bye?

**BO:** I never thought I could leave P'an Ku, but the time had come. And I feel the same way now. Something else in life is waiting for me, even though I am not sure what yet.

**RR:** What will you be doing next year at this time? Will it include your own writing?

**BO:** I see catch-up time for things I have put on hold, travel, and yes, some time, writing. But I am not putting a strict time limit on it.

**RR:** Do you have any advice for writers?

**BO:** Enjoy writing or don't go into it. There is a lot of soul in writing, but there is also a lot of meticulous craft, and the competition is keen. But there is a joy in writing that is hard to beat -- treasure that sense of creating, then nothing can deprive you of that feeling of accomplishment and fulfillment.

## Betty Owen as I know her...

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*"I came to a writers' workshop on a rainy day at South Campus in 1981. I had never been there before and was running a temperature of 101 degrees, and was sweating profusely as I was wandering around the campus, feeling miserable. Someone stopped me, wiped my brow, and asked me if she could help me with a genuine concern that really touched me. That person was Betty Owen, who did not know me at all back then. That single act elevated me in a way that only Betty can. She has touched everyone she's met in a similar way."*

Pat Ellingham  
P'an Ku Advisor

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*"In the Central Campus cafeteria, as she carefully read through each page of my first smudged hand written collection of poems, Betty's was the first clear face I saw after surfacing from years of certified insanity: I have been an optimist ever since! Thank you Betty!"*

Eileen Eliot  
English Professor



*"I have not known Betty my entire life, yet she supports the poet in me as if she has always known what makes my soul breathe, what makes me able to do everything else I do well."*

Elisa Albo  
Professor of the Year, 1995-1996

*"I've known her for thirty years. I've never heard her say no, or be negative about anyone or anything. She is absolutely the best human being I've known. Twelve hours before my son died, she was at his hospital door. I will never forget her deep sense of caring."*

Judy Nichols  
English Professor

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*"Betty is one of the most intensely caring people I have ever had the pleasure of knowing, both personally and professionally. She is responsible for why I am teaching at BCC and I owe everything that I am to Betty."*

Dr. Barbra Nightingale  
English Professor

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*"Betty Owen is the fairest jewel in the BCC crown."*

Dr. Scott Feaster  
English Professor

## PTA WORLD

*by Kelly Wolfe*

As long as it rhymes, it's ok

As long as it rhymes, it's ok

As long as it rhymes, it's ok

-As long-

-As long-

As long as you bowl, you're ok

As long as you dress like me, you're ok

As long as you wave my flag, you're ok

As long as you're in therapy, you're ok

As long as you hide your opinions, you're ok

As long as you stay stupid, you're ok

As long as you believe, you're ok

As long as you believe, you're ok

As long as you believe



**The Tailspin**  
**by Allen Greenstone**

Spinning, twisting, hurtling  
down.  
Faster, faster towards the  
ground  
Wires screaming, standing  
taut.  
Metal groaning anguish  
wrought.  
Kaleidoscope of trees and  
grass.  
Melange of the earthen  
mass  
Which spins before its terrored  
eyes,  
And seeks to tear it from the  
skies.  
Stricken eagle - faltering  
bird.  
Frightened shriek that can't be  
heard.  
Victim trapped in metal  
womb  
Resisting, wrapped within his  
tomb.  
He wipes the shock from fearful  
eyes.  
Becomes, again, that which he  
flies.  
Control stick forward - rudder  
full!  
The wings grab air - propellers  
pull!  
Sustaining wind begins its  
song  
Across the wings, now straight and  
strong.  
Dancing in ethereal  
sky,  
The pilot rules again, on high!

## Meat and Potatoes

*by Jennifer Gilbert*

You're nothing but meat and potatoes

and you ridicule me

in my state of thirst

in my state of hunger

and still, you find more to boast about

in your hours

of conformed logic.

And you're so simple, you bring misery

to life--

because you're meat and potatoes

and you live your world

on top of a needle

and I say,

plunge forth,

and open your stale mind.

## Revolution

*by Gianna Lamorte*

We cheer on  
foreign revolutions,  
civil wars,  
struggles for freedom,  
burning tanks,  
and dead Communists.  
But here—  
one raised clenched  
black fist  
sends America  
to panic.  
Not here!  
Not here...  
don't bring your revolution  
home.

## Humility

*by Bruce Megee*

Ears like doors  
to criticism close,  
protect the pride within.  
Opened wide  
dispose of pride,  
let humility transcend.



## Blind

*by Colleen Hurley*

Blind, in one's mind.  
Listless cane  
in left hand,  
strangler's leash  
in other-  
you try to get away.  
The feet multiply  
and the fear  
tap dances into echoes.  
You try, try-try to  
get away, but it laughs  
at you, in you.  
Into your ears, up your nose,  
into your eyes, open wide  
it will groan, cackle,  
snicker and twitch itself  
into every hole that leads  
a way inside of you.  
Confusion would be funny,  
but Irony's eyes are shining.  
And it, being the basket case  
waiting in the corner,  
is unweaving its frustrated arms  
never touched or admired,  
left unseen.  
Blind,  
in one's mind.  
Listless cane  
in left hand,  
strangler's leash  
in other-  
the body, just  
walks away.

# The Lady in the Red Sequin Dress

The elderly lady in the red sequin dress dimpled and twinkled at the handsome stranger dancing with her. Her bony chest, showing extraordinary cleavage, drew asthmatic breaths as she strove to keep up with his expertise at the polka. Her eyes, heavy with mascara, glanced coquetishly at her partner and the promise inherent therein was a source of embarrassment even to the rogue he was. 'My God, she must be seventy, if she's a day!' he thought, groaning to himself. 'How did I ever get stuck with this broad?'

50 How indeed! He remembered coming into this bar with his hand clutching the last twenty dollar bill in his pocket. His empty wallet was stuck in his jacket and perspiration made his jacket stick to him. This Florida oasis must have registered 100 degrees in the shade and all he wanted was a long, cool drink, hopefully along with a long, cool blonde. Only one of his wishes was forthcoming. The blonde was noticeably absent, for this evening at any rate. He nursed his Tom Collins gratefully while he surveyed the crowd at the bar and tables nearby. He almost missed the old lady, pie-eyed from too many vodkas, but the red dress drew everyone's attention, even his. It was an eye opener even if she wasn't.

The red sequins caught the revolving neon light on the ceiling, encircling and displaying her like fireworks exploding in a crowd. She might have been a looker in her heyday, but her youth was well gone and she hadn't aged well. Her body was skinny and her face wore too many

wrinkles to properly welcome a young stranger. Pity and kindness weren't two of his attributes, so when she flashed her dentures at him, he blanched and looked the other way. It didn't stop her. She weaved toward him in red satin shoes, put her hands on his shoulders and told him gleefully,

"We're going to dance the night away, sweetie."

He tried to shove her away and wasn't even gentle. She ignored the insult, put her hands around his neck, cuddled her skeletal body close to his and started crooning to the music. It was a slow dance so he suffered it, but when the polka was introduced, he knew he had to get away from this hag. She was just too much. That was until she whispered in his ear,

"Let's you and I get out of here and spend some of the boodle I got in my bag. Whaddyou say?"

"Okay, little doll," his eyes were grim, but his voice smiled at her.

'Hell, the old girl might be good for a few. Don't look a gift horse in the mouth, idiot.' He was savage with himself. This just might be his chance. He remembered his old buddy, Mike, who always laughed and told him, "Just put the American flag over her face, boy, and do it for Old Glory!"

Looking at her now, as she minced toward her car in high heels, he shuddered. 'It won't take long,' he comforted himself. 'Pretend she's Corinne. Pretend she's tall, tanned and blonde. Pretend... goddamn you!' Who knows if he

## by Terry Blumenthal

could even get it up with her? Geez, she could be his Grandma! He was thirty and anyone over 40 years was old. This dame was gruesome, but he was broke and he had to get his hands on some cash. He'd make it fast and get out quick with whatever she had. He steered her towards her car, a white custom Cadillac, took her keys and opened the door.

She giggled up at him and for one awful moment he thought her upper plate would come flying out. God, she was bombed. He swung her legs over and pushed her back in the seat.

"Gimme your keys, I'll drive," he told her smiling, pinching her tired old face in a friendly gesture.

She opened her red purse and gave him her keys. He got in alongside her and then she slouched all over him.

"Kiss me," she ordered, her arms clawing at his neck, his shoulders and his face.

He shuddered violently and she misunderstood.

"Take it easy soldier," she laughed at him with awakening desire.

He opened the door and pushed her out; she tottering on her stiletto heels. He leaned her against the car and with a quick look around, determined the parking lot was empty. He pulled up her dress and took her savagely with nary a word nor a moments tenderness.

When he finished, he zipped up his pants, pushed her aside and got in the car. That's when he noticed the red satin purse still on the seat. He opened it hastily and saw a

thick wedge of bills there along with a lipstick. He put the money away in his wallet. Then he opened the window and threw the purse at her. She staggered, held onto the car door and muttered incoherently. Reaching for the purse, she swayed and fell down while he was putting the key in the ignition.

"To hell with her," he muttered, putting his foot down hard on the gas pedal.

In the mirror, he noticed her laying on the cement floor. He thought briefly of his mother, then reluctantly reversed the car and went back to investigate.

She was very still when he got out. He cursed himself for coming back while he listened to her heart. There was no beat. He opened her eyes and saw they had rolled back in her head. No breath, no breath at all. He panicked. He pushed her body away. No doubt about it, the old gal was dead. Better get away before someone spotted him. He had already served time for armed robbery. All he needed was for them to pin a murder and a rape charge on him to boot.

He gunned the motor and left the scene with not a moments' thought for the victim. Lordy, she was past history. He had his stash. It was time for him to get on with his life.

The old lady still twinkled in her red, sequin dress, but the lights in the parking lot went out and she shimmered no more. She lay there still and unnoticed until morning when they bundled her off to the morgue.



## Mr. Vending Machine Man

*by Jennifer Gilbert*

Mr. Vending Machine Man,  
You give me what I want  
But sometimes you don't work  
    and that frustrates me.  
Sometimes you sit back and chuckle  
At my acts of ferocity  
Kicking and banging  
    screaming at you.  
But you have your power over me  
And all I can do is wait for you  
And your random power surge  
    hoping that you follow through for me.  
I don't understand you, Mr. Vending Machine Man  
I deposited the right amount  
I'd suck dry my brain  
    to hold one morsel of affection.  
Mr. Vending Machine Man,  
Do you live off of my spastic outbursts?  
I don't understand you  
    and now I'm not so sure I even want to.  
That's it—I've had it with you  
I've seen my reflection amid the shiny wrappers  
And now I realize  
    I don't need you anymore.  
You, Mr. Vending Machine Man,  
Have dispensed your last package of sweet nothings  
I'm pulling the plug on you  
    because you only work when you want to.  
And now you'll never work again.

## The Other Woman

*by Autum Pease*

I try to call him  
    but *she* ties up his line  
I would vist him  
    but *she's* always there  
I ask him to play with me  
    but he's busy with *her*  
I try to call him again and again  
    but his line is constantly busy  
Day and Night  
He's on with *her*  
His *modem*

## Sunday Morning

*by Jerry Hahn*

A secret command passed along  
on the back of a cocktail napkin  
in the blue haze of a smoke filled  
bar:

"Dance floor 4 am."

### **BOOM BOOM BOOM**

epileptic speakers heave  
computerized rhythms  
pulsate  
kamikaze lasers  
crash  
electric sparks  
crackle  
deep into the abyss

Hypnotic sways  
x-tasy highs  
acid laced stamps  
drenched in saliva  
tightly gripped hidden treasures  
crystal blue persuasion  
euphoria achieved

Bodies pressed together  
locked in continuous  
gyrations  
of bump and grind motions  
slaves to industrial beats  
and deep bass crescendos  
an orgy of dance and sex  
mingled as one  
engulfed in a pool of foam

House lights suddenly come up  
exposed figures run from the light  
like Blanche Du Bois  
quick escapes from the approach  
of morning

Finally they meet  
glances exchanged  
master revealed  
It's 4 am.



## *Le Retour*

*by Jean Watson*

*Dans un coin de ma chambre, au sommet,  
essayant de percer les mystere du tenebre,  
je retrace ton être de femme creole.*

*Le matin, le silence, encore vierges,  
ta voix trompe le temps et la grande espace  
et, mon reveil portait l'odeur des fleurs.*

*Dans mon envers, je construis un monde  
j'attends le bruit des pas d'un grand jour,  
un jour ou rien ne fait des plis.*

*Je veux cette heure vive pour tout faire,  
veiller un bon vin gazeux de sa couche,  
sauver tout espoir etranglé de belles fêtes.*

*Dans un coin de ma chambre, il fait nuit,  
ma balance resiste sous le poids du mutisme  
je porte en moi la force brutale d'un retour,  
le retour pour combler l'anfractuosite.*

*Anodin, je marche comme le reptile  
sans parfaite oscillation, j'invente ta voix,  
et, tout reprend l'aile de la souvenance.*

*Un layon tout droit traverse mon âme  
Dans l'ana de mon coeur, je tire ton poeme.  
Un jour, au seuil de ta porte, tremblant,  
au seuil de ta porte comme un fole homme,  
je veux te l'ânonner avec les yeux morts.*

## Celestial Sestina

*by Cheryl Bringas*

On a winter night, under glowing moon,  
in a cloudless sky, a tiny fairy  
plays hide-and-seek amidst the stars--  
flits to-and-fro on dragon-  
fly wings, their color stolen from the setting sun.  
Orange marmalade hair, muted by silver

light, streams out behind her in the silver  
night, as she flies in the face of the moon.  
Her eyes, yellow like the sun  
at the brightest part of day (no other fairy  
eyes can compare), resemble those of a dragon.  
She blinks mischievously at the stars

she hides behind in her game. The stars  
quiver at her touch - cast silver  
fragments of light into her saffron dragon  
eyes. She peeks at the platinum moon,  
raises an eyebrow in question, wiggles her fairy  
wings with satisfaction for the answer: the sun

will not yet appear. It will not rise, the sun,  
until the night has had her fill - until the stars  
grow weary of twinkling. Until then the fairy,  
free to roam throughout the silver  
night, gives not another thought to the sun.  
Her game resumes. Flaxen yellow dragon

eyes dart first right, then left. Like a dragon  
breathes fire in a stream of gold drawn from the sun,  
she shoots forth from her hiding place, crosses the face of the  
moon, disappears among another group of stars.  
Concealed by sparkling lights on this silver  
night, she erupts in fairy

giggles at her solitary fun. Suddenly, her fairy  
head appears, turns toward the glowing orb above.  
A dragon eye winks at the source of fluorescent silver  
light. She sighs - knows soon her play will end when the sun  
will show to chase away the shadows. Her friends the stars  
will fade from view to rest, as will the moon.

And so, the fairy welcomes the arrival of the sun,  
flies toward home on dragonfly wings, smiles at the stars  
glittered with silver, blows a good-day kiss to the moon.

Daddy's Drunk  
(for my grandfather, his dad was the town drunk)

*by Becci Goodall*

Sss-Sorry  
slobbered from  
swollen lips  
puffing sour  
feral breath on  
sleepy faces  
fight...  
disgust shimmers  
like sun on ice  
thickly frozen  
brain cells  
suspended in gray  
slitted eyes  
staring  
blinking prozac insanity  
bleary words  
shredding goose down dreams  
like rusty nails  
reaming  
chalky blackboards  
huddled screams  
clench the lungs

panic steers  
remote children  
careening into  
dark cliffs  
tumbling twirling  
thrusting screaming  
raspy snores  
jerk awake  
kids are cold  
he groans heaves  
12 year old boy  
bangs in eyes  
hungry and mad  
loves his mother  
gun clicks  
slow motion  
smoke stirs  
pre-dawn air  
life begins



## Change

*by Colleen Hurley*

Simplicity had curly legs,  
said open your mouth and say ah.  
My jaw pulled back like a trigger,  
flutters of tension released.

Blue filled my lungs, compressed.  
Teeth eased out their branches,  
waved to my deflated body carried  
by its own ruptured dam.

Pale balance turned into pride  
I could not chew. You were shifty,  
pointed out unveiled shapes  
in the crowd above.

My tongue is a windmill, frozen,  
after your fist plunged low,  
roared down my nervous throat.  
You laughed as words stumbled.

Simplicity has clipped her wings,  
coos, trips us up, while pleasure  
you gave lingers where once I  
could see and tells me that

Orion has scattered.

## *Sans toi*

by Sana Ghazzah

*J'ai le coeur qui pleure.  
Il pleure ton absence.  
J'ai l'esprit vide,  
Froissé d'indifférence.  
Mes yeux sont pleins de chagrin.  
Ils regrettent ton silence.  
Sans toi, je suis dans l'inconscience.  
Je vois ma vie si sombre,  
Que je réfute mon existence.  
Je t'en prie, rends-moi ma confiance  
Car, je ne peux plus supporter  
Ni ton éloignement, ni ma souffrance.*

## Animated Nature

*by Heather Eberhardt*

The sun's radiance  
casting my soul  
on the skeleton  
of the walk before me.

My skin is scorched  
by the presence of  
the afternoon fire

Perspiration flows  
from my every  
pore, coating my body with a slick sheen of oil.

My throat, parched,  
thirsting for a taste of water  
never to be found.

Lips--dry,  
cracked...  
dying.

I stumble to the ground,  
reaching out to all the  
scurrying ants  
passing me by.

None stop to reach back.



## The Last Time

*by Jerry Hahn*

The last time I was a young boy  
I walked out of 23C 's bathroom  
in the Starlight Motel  
my trick was completely undressed.

A mass of hairy middle-aged flesh  
lay sprawled out on a faded blue,  
mildew stained bedspread--  
Goliath ready for a different kind of revenge.

With the light taste of whiskey still in my mouth,  
I tried to swallow and savor a taste long gone.  
He took off his once white now soiled socks,  
A strange considerate act  
almost a hint of class.

A small deed made all the difference,  
I held out my trembling hand.

## The Second Hand

*by Natalie Kappes*

Time spent, short days filled with cliff climbing thoughts.  
You appear, a calm mask on your pained face,  
mystery erases unwanted pencil marks, solved.  
You walk out of my life with reassurance, you say "I will."  
Along with your porcelain mask of lies, strawberry  
sweet words, you vanish, no clues. The riddle of man  
seeps from the faded walls, controls my thoughts  
like those of the blind. Blue darkness drowns in the night air,  
soon the home, the body changes into a wintry ocean.  
Green palms wade longingly in the whirling  
appetite of the wind. The moon ballet dances  
into the arms of the clouds.

Time slips into a repetition of "I told you so's."  
A vintage clock sits with folded arms, stares, leash of time.  
The long arrow points to the militant twelve.  
The short arrow stretches to the elegant six.  
The thin second hand is confused, lost  
in a circular pattern, jazz dances in an empty path  
unaware of the rhythmic pulse-tick tocks tries  
to offer the wanderer a path out of the autumn woods.

He never listens. He is frantic, dissatisfied.  
He marvels in his own muddy thoughts.

Yeah, well...

*by Autumn Pease*

You say God and Jesus are good and fair  
I show you countries at war  
You say religion guides you down a straight and narrow  
I show you your path in the carnival mirror  
You say there is a heaven  
I show you the rapist who lives on my block  
You say Jesus loves you  
I show you your medical records  
You say no one goes to heaven but through Him  
I show you a drowned baby  
You say Jesus loves everyone who will let him  
I show you a pleading old man on his death bed  
You say prayer frees the soul  
I show you a mime with hips moving and no sound  
You say love is eternal  
I show you the divorce rates  
You say there is a God  
I show you the AIDS virus  
You say God and Jesus are good and fair  
Yeah, well..



*Betty,*

You have taught me that I have potential. I have grown under your care. There were many times that I did not feel like I could make it. You have taught me that I can not only make it, I can enjoy it too. Integrity has taken on new meaning for me after knowing you, learning with you, working with you. I have always been told that there is no such thing as a realistic Win/Win outcome in life. You have proved them wrong and you have passed this legacy to so many generations. I have known you only a short time but I feel like my life has accelerated through knowing you. For years, I was a closet journal writer. I have, since knowing you, realized I'm a poet. Two magazines later, I am an editor of a literary magazine. I will always remember you told me to just keep growing. Informed optimism is your credo; I have made it mine. This magazine owes its life to you. Love is all there is; this we learn by example. P'an Ku has helped so many people realize their own potential. I am honored to have been a part of it. If I can help nurture the creativity of only one other person, I have fulfilled your legacy. . .

Love,

*Rena*

Student Editor, P'an Ku

**Betty Owen -**

Words are not enough;  
we need chisels and stuff  
to carve in brass or stone

how our love, hope, have grown  
by knowing you, admiring you.  
You were the one who knew.

You held everything so high -  
chin, ideals, art, poetry.  
You led, loved and fed your flock.

Stop the day, night, and clock!  
Confiscate all the world's confetti,  
let it all fall on our Betty!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris". A long, thin horizontal line extends from the bottom of the signature to the left.

*Chris Reiss*  
*English Professor*



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